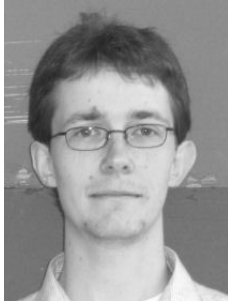


## Understanding Value in the Briefing Process



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### KEYWORDS

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### Introduction

In building projects, a frequent complaint is that the client's brief as a document is ineffective for communicating the client's wishes, needs, and requirements to the project participants. An effective briefing process is essential for achieving a successful building process where the outcome is a client satisfied with the structure delivered, and project participants who are satisfied with their contribution margin. To ensure this, value should be a main concern in the briefing process. In this context, value can be perceived both as delivery of a product to the client, and as the cooperative process of developing and communicating the client's brief. This is typically carried out more or less successfully through Value Management and Value-Based Management, respectively.

### Two value paradigms

When broadening the value concept, there is an important difference between value in singular and values in plural. "*Value is what an individual places upon an object or an outcome, i.e. the value one places on pay*" [Meglino & Ravlin 1998, p. 353]. What Meglino & Ravlin state is that value is related to assessments about a product and the price. An example of this view can be found in Lean Production, where Womack & Jones [1996, p. 311] define value as "*a capability provided to a customer at the right time and at an appropriate price, as defined in each case by the customer.*" Basically two types of the described value exist; utility value and market value. Utility value is associated with the technical and aesthetic construction and the use of the construction, e.g. brick type, top lighting, colour, usability, flexibility, etc. Market value is closely connected with the utility value. It describes the value of utility and quality in money and relates to demand.

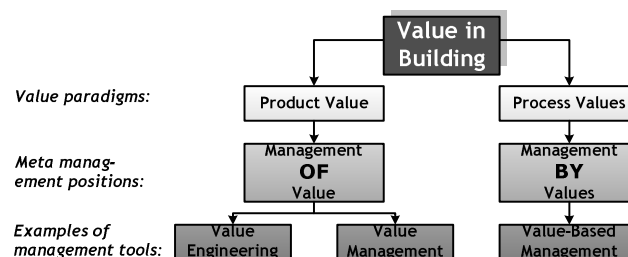
Values, on the other hand, are the principles by which we live, or one might say that values are our individual bible or the paradigm through which we see the world [Covey 1989]. They are the core beliefs, morals and ideals of individuals and are reflected in attitudes and behaviours in society, like "*At the bottom of all human activities are values,(...)*" [Köhler 1966], and "*Whether a behaviour is morally correct or not is determined by the values that lie behind the decision*". [Hauen et al. 1999, p. 45]. In the briefing process, and in the rest of the building process, values are the core fundament of successful interpersonal communication, coordination and understanding, e.g. cooperation.

In other words, values are personal guidelines like “It is against my values to lie”, whereas value relates to a product and its assets, and it is often connected to monetary relations like “The new Skoda is of great value” [Wandahl 2005, p. 56].

### Product and process value

A transformation of the value concept into the context of building projects is not straight forward. Some suggest that the two types of values could be identified as product value and process values [e.g. BEC 2003; Wandahl & Bejder 2003]. A distinction between product and process is useful in construction, and this division has prior been debated in the Danish construction industry [e.g. EBST 2001]. To talk about a product viewpoint is mostly relevant as the purpose of a building project is to build and deliver a product (a structure) to a client. The client has requirements, wishes and ideas to the product, e.g. quality, usability, flexibility, design, price, etc. The architectural, economical, material and functional aspects of building are hence gathered in a **product value** paradigm. The product is determined, designed and erected in the building process. The building process is hence means to an end. In this process all the participants need to cooperate to fulfil the reasonable needs and requirements from the client. The success of this process is highly dependent of the personal values of the participants and the common values of the project. The second paradigm is, therefore, the **process value** paradigm.

The two value types are considered to be paradigms because they reflect two general but different types of value, and because all other descriptions of management concepts related to value can be embodied in these two paradigms, cf. Fig. 1.



**Figure 1. The two value paradigms prompt two different management positions, Management of value and Management by values.**

Two meta positions of management (management of value and management by value) are derived from the two paradigms. They do not describe pragmatic and specific management tools, procedures, etc., and are hence considered to be meta positions within building management related to value. Finally, Value Management, Value Engineering and Value-Based Management are examples of management concepts derived from each of the value paradigms. Value Management is a name for practical management concepts aiming at defining what product value means to a client organisation within a particular context, and to ensure that the value defined by the client organisation is embodied in the design solution in such a way that it maximizes the client organisation’s value for money relation. This mainly entails workshop-alike-approaches in the briefing process and enforces a focus on the brief-design interface. Value Engineering is also concerned with the product value, but Value Engineering focuses on cost optimizing the design solution and the manufacturing process. Furthermore, to ensure all elements in the design solution are buildable and carried out during construction. Value-Based Management on the other hand is based on the soft management approach of applying process values as means to increase the product value delivered primarily to the client organisation, and secondly to the other project participants. This involves a definition and description of common values for the whole project organisation, which unconsciously influence human behaviour in a more proactive manner, i.e. an empowerment of all the project participants to improve their background for decision-making and coordination of these actions mutually.

### **Value(s) used in the briefing process**

In the briefing process the client's reasonable entitled needs, requirements, and wishes should be explored, elaborated, and communicated in a dialogue between client and designer [Hudson 1999; Kamara *et al.* 2001]. Moreover, the aim of the project should be stated, and the needs should be uncovered and if possible weighed, and the desired quality level should be stated. This involves a range of activities and decisions, which have high impact on the subsequent building process. Many of the decisions taken in the briefing process have long term consequences. It is, therefore, important with high effectiveness, i.e. to determine the right product. Due to the dynamic conditions in the early phase of construction it is also important to aim at a high efficiency, e.g. the right briefing process. For that reason, both of the value paradigms should be in focus in the briefing process. The product value paradigm and the process value paradigm are subsequently discussed in the following two paragraphs.

### **Management of value (the product value paradigm)**

Decisions in the briefing process about the product are a main activity, and the product value paradigm therefore plays an important role. Derived from the product value paradigm the management position 'management of value' occurs. Management of value is the traditional approach where well-known systems and structures are applied to ensure that the product value required and needed by the client organisation is realised in an efficient manner. It seeks maximization of the value delivered to the customer plus increased marginal profit for the project partners. Furthermore, it focuses on the goals described in the client's brief, and the goals mainly belong to the product value category. The emphasis on "of" is because value is not used in the management, other mechanisms are applied to obtain value.

Value Management is perhaps the most known management discipline in the briefing process based on the product value paradigm. This Value Management process is critical for a successful construction. In the brief the project team and the client has great ability to influence the cost of the project, because most of the cost is allocated in the brief but not realized until later [Abdul-Kadir & Price 1995].

The purpose of VM is in other words to increase the effectiveness, i.e. to decide the right value. However, primarily the client decides what the right value is, and it is therefore vital to understand the client's value system. This is not easy because all the client's needs are not explicitly known, neither to the client himself nor to the project team. This situation is in the Johari Window framework referred to as the closed part of the window [Luft 1984]. An implicit client product value system will result in an incomplete design solution, not containing all the client's requirements, which again will result in a finished building that does not fully satisfy the client (received < expected). Kano presents a model that classifies the client's requirements with the purpose of achieving as high customer satisfaction as possible [Kano *et al.* 1984]. Kano presents three different types of requirements. *Must-be requirements* are basic criteria of a product, which the client takes for granted and does, therefore, not explicitly demand them. In construction an example of must-be requirements could be, e.g. doors and windows, correct sound insulation and plumbing connections. If these requirements are not fulfilled, the client will be extremely dissatisfied. On the other hand, as the client takes the must-be requirements for granted, their fulfilment will not increase his satisfaction dramatically. *One-dimensional requirements* are expected by the client and, therefore, explicitly mentioned to the project team. The client's satisfaction is proportional to the level of fulfilment. An example of this could be: roof light, installation of kitchen range, parquet floor, etc. *Attractive requirements* have the greatest influence on client satisfaction. However, they are neither explicitly expressed nor expected by the client. If these latent needs are not met, however, there is no feeling of dissatisfaction. If the briefing process not is worked properly, there is a risk of not recognizing must-be and attractive requirements. Furthermore, there is also a risk of not recognizing all of the one-dimensional

requirements when the briefing process is not taken seriously. The result is a design solution and later a construction which gives the client a poor perception of “value for money”.

Several elements affect the briefing process and hence make the briefing process full of hurdles. Some of the well-known challenges are the client’s level of professionalism and the size and complexity of the building project. In Barrett and Stanley [1999] the ‘human dimension’ is mentioned as problematic in the briefing process, i.e. an insufficient understanding of the individual and lack of efficient cooperation is a major root to briefing failures. The process value paradigm is, therefore, relevant to stress when seeking an effective briefing process.

### **Management by values (the process value paradigm)**

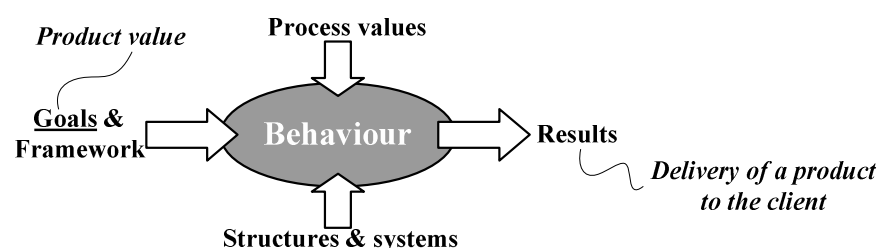
The briefing process is a phase characterized by a high degree of uncertainty, dynamic, and involvement of many different persons. In such an environment traditional systems and structures are often inadequate for managing the process. Both in theory and in practice it has been indicated that soft process values as basis for influencing the human behaviour (management) are more efficient.

Management by values applies commonly agreed (shared) values as a supplementary mechanism to manage and control human behaviour. It uses process values as means to achieve the main goal of the building project. The main goal is still the delivery of product value to the client organisation. It is called management by values because values are an element used in the management, not the goal. In other words, the purpose is to achieve an efficient cooperation. Cooperation takes place among individuals, and the cooperation is hence founded on the process value paradigm.

Theoretically, it is acknowledged that process values directly influence behaviour, because they encourage individuals to act in accordance with their values [Rokeach 1973; Williams 1979]. Values are, however, only one of a number of forces that effect behaviour, but in situations of absence of other task and situational variables (e.g. incentives, limitations) that influence behaviour, values should have great impact [Meglino & Ravlin 1998]. This is often the situation we are dealing with in the briefing process, i.e. a high degree of uncertainty and a chaotic and dynamic process. Human values have implications for the interaction between individuals because they influence each individual’s perception and behaviour. Moreover, when persons share similar values (i.e., interpersonal value congruence), they tend to perceive external stimuli in similar ways. Among other things, this similarity in interpreting and classifying environmental events serves to clarify their interpersonal communications. Individuals with similar value systems also behave in similar ways. This enables them to better predict the behaviour of others and more efficiently coordinate their actions. In effect, value similarity produces a social system or culture that facilitates the interactions necessary for individuals to achieve their common goals [Kluckhohn 1951].

### **Discussion**

The connection between process values and product value is perceived as a means-end connection where the use of process values is a means to the delivery of a product containing the client’s values (wishes, needs, and requirements), cf. Fig 2.



**Figure 2. Process values as a means to the end goal, i.e. the client’s product value.**

Process values are hence normally not in itself a goal. The use of process values to influence behavior in the building process results in a more proactive management situation compared to when traditional steering mechanisms are applied such as systems (quality, time, budget, etc.) and structure [Wandahl 2005]. In the briefing process a proactive focus is important because the client together with the project partners have to make decisions on several future concerns. In the beginning of a project life cycle, where the dynamics and uncertainties are highest, the use of process values is most efficient. Later in the cycle, when the production is in progress and high productivity is needed, the traditional systems are efficient. Hence, the use of mechanisms to influence behavior shifts during a project life cycle.

## Conclusion

Value in building can be understood through two different value paradigms. Firstly, product value which views value as the product and associated functions, services, etc. delivered to the client. Secondly, process values, which views value is the personal values stating the foundation of interpersonal cooperation. Both paradigms are active in the briefing process. The decision about and communication of product value is the essence of the briefing process. However, to be successful in stating these product values(goals), process values should be in focus to nurse and facilitate the cooperation in this process.

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