

Now, if I were you reading this article I would probably be asking the question: “What? What is he talking about?” and “Why is he talking about freedom?” Well, we should probably turn the clock back to 6 or 7 years ago when we founded the company. I wanted to have a set of values that our company could use as guidelines when we made decisions. Honesty and integrity were obvious, but I was looking for values that had a deeper meaning. We sat around and brainstormed for hours. When we got done we found the following values that made sense. Those were:

Growth	We wanted what every business wants and that is revenue growth so that we could support our families and provide jobs for others. But, we also wanted to promote individual growth for our employees.
Relationships	We did not begin Convergence with the idea that technology was the panacea for small businesses. Quite the contrary we have always believed that relationships drive technology. That’s why you will hear all of our employees continually ask “why?” We cannot build solid technology solutions without understanding your business. And we cannot understand your business without good working relationships.
Existing customers first.	We have all heard of the paradoxical “conundrum.” This is our enigma. How can we have one value espousing “growth” and a second value that obviously states that we place existing customers first? The answer for us was as easy as looking to the functions of the United States congress and senate. Both have objectives, yet neither can be successful without the other.
Ahead of the curve.	We are all technology freaks! We obviously know that keeping networks fined tuned promotes healthy networks and prevents data loss and down time! That’s the simple explanation. But, to do that we need to be ahead of the curve. Of course, this takes on a personal nature as well. We want our employees to not only realize growth, but to stay ahead of the curve so they can consult with you effectively.
Teamwork	Teamwork can be an overused term today. But, at Convergence our entire business would come to a screeching halt if our employees were not working together as a team. It’s that simple. That is one of the reasons you might speak to more than one person when looking for help.

If you look closely, the first letter of each of these words spells out the word GREAT! We believe that at Convergence. We do not arrogantly speak in terms of our own greatness. But, we live and breathe this every day through the values of the company.

So, how do these values promote freedom? These values speak to business health. When there is health in business everything runs smoothly. That’s not to say there are never challenges. Like all small businesses, we face our challenges every single day. But, the health of the organization as lived through its values promotes freedom.

During our recent annual planning session our management team decided that our purpose for existence was to promote freedom. That’s a lofty statement and an effusive goal. *Can we do it?* Well, here’s what we are going to do to promote freedom. There are three freedom fronts:

Our Employers

We are really striving to take the fear out of IT for small business owners. Every decision we make revolves around finding ways to minimize interruption for our employers. Part of that is just taking the time to ensure that the people making the decisions feel comfortable with what we are saying.

It's always interesting to reflect back on the first time we met a new employer and remember how stressed out they were about IT and then to think about how they view IT now and it's like night and day.

We believe there is still a long way to go to make this any even more enjoyable experience and ultimately creating more freedom but we are well on our way.

Our Customers

I believe that we can help promote freedom amongst our customers by making sure that we resolve their issues as fast as humanly possible.

All of us are asked to go to work each day and generate results for the organization we work for. If our tools aren't working, in this case our computer, that doesn't make it very easy for us to get our jobs done. Freedom comes when you are uninhibited by external forces. Our job is to do everything in our power to minimize the impact those external forces have on our customers.

Convergence Employees

This is where we place the most emphasis because I believe that if your employees are happy and experience freedom then your customers will feel the same way. We have been one of the Best Places To Work in Oregon the past three years. I view this as the measuring stick for whether or not we are promoting freedom internally.

Our biggest achievement on this front was just creating a better work-life balance. We all used to work well over 60 hours a week and I think the average employee now works about 45 including myself.

An example the other day during the snow storms in the Portland Metro area was that one of our employees shot some video footage of him sledding with his kids at home during his lunch break. He emailed it out to all of us and the next day he came in and mentioned to me that, *that* was freedom. Freedom – something as simple as being able to feel free to go sledding during the day with your kids.

A quote from the movie *First Knight* says it best - "In serving each other we become free." Ultimately, freedom starts with each and every one of us. If we spend less time focusing on ourselves and more time focusing outward with a spirit of servitude we will experience true freedom. (Thanks to Chuck Surret for the quote.) At Convergence Networks, we believe that if we foster an environment that makes it easier for all of those around us to espouse that simple quote we will leave the world a better place than we found it.

Your business is extremely important to us. More importantly, your relationship is important to us. Please do not hesitate to contact me or contribute your thoughts on how we can promote freedom!