



# United Airlines, Artificial Intelligence, and Donald Trump:

## REAWAKENING VALUES IN THE ERA OF FAKE SERVICE, FAKE REALITY, AND FAKE NEWS

BY AVI LIRAN AND SIMON L. DOLAN

Society has evolved and not all aspects of our lives were able to cope up with the changes and advances of the modern world. The authors elaborately sketch the current state of values particularly in our professional lives. The article is both a discussion and a call to be humane in the midst of an ever changing era.

Imagine that the artificial intelligence era is already here. You are getting off the autonomous taxi at O'Hare International Airport in Chicago. Your smart suitcases jumps out of the boot and find their way by themselves through security via intelligent check-in process all the way to the plane.

The biometric and security smart sensors identify you without presenting any paper documents. You are cleared smoothly through immigration and walk through the security-scanning tunnel to the duty-free area.

With the boarding pass coded into your wearable computer which is synchronised with the check-in counter, you board United Airlines flight 3411 to Louisville without waiting.

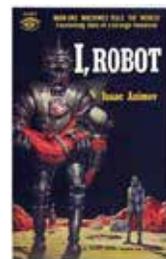
A charming team of robots, who look just like humans, welcomes you on board; the only human on the flight is the captain.

Suddenly you hear an announcement, "This is your Captain speaking. We need four volunteers to de-board the flight. We are offering full compensation and rewards."

As no one volunteers, four passengers are randomly selected to be removed; you are one of them. Three passengers have complied and left. You refuse. After all, you have paid for your seat and have already boarded, and in addition have a very important meeting to attend.

The robot Purser **Bob** reports to the Captain:

- **Bob:** *Captain-Sir, the fourth passenger refuses our order. He demands to stay on board.*
- **Captain:** *Bob, we have four crewmembers that must board the plane. Call airport security. They know how to handle passengers that refuse to obey the Captain.*
- **Bob:** *Captain-Sir, may I remind you of United Airlines first core value listed on our website: "We Fly Right On the ground and in the air, we hold ourselves to the highest standards of safety and reliability."*
- **Captain:** *I do not care about values. We have four crew members to fly to Louisville. Just follow my orders.*
- **Bob:** *Captain! Sir! May I remind you our other core values: "We Fly Friendly Warm and welcoming; this is who we are." and "We Fly Together As a united airline; we respect every voice, communicate openly and honestly, make decisions with facts and empathy, and celebrate our journey together." Removing a sitting passenger who has bought a ticket will not be warm, respectful, empathetic and friendly. It is too late to do it now. We should have done it at the gate before people board.*
- **Bob:** *Moreover, Sir, according to the data that I have compiled, deviating from core values can lead*



I, Robot is a collection of science fiction short stories by American writer Isaac Asimov.



Screenshot from the video on flight 3411 showing 69-year-old Dr. David Dao, who was forcibly removed from his seat.

to costly consequences. Do you remember Wells Fargo scandal last year? It resulted with devastating effects on shareholders' value, brand image and employees' morale. Five thousand employees were ultimately fired and the CEO was forced to resign. I beg you to reconsider.

At this point, the human pilot turns red, loses his temper and raises his voice. "Shut up stupid robot. I am the captain here. I will call security."

Within minutes the airport security team comprised of a human commander and three armed robots enters the plane. The commander insists that you leave the plane. You refuse.

### What If the Security Team at O'Hare Airport Were Comprised of Robots?

The human boss (Bill) commands the robots to remove you by force. To his surprise, the security robots freeze. They refuse the command.

Jane, the Sergeant robot, tells the human commander:

- **Jane:** *Sir, if we will try to take this person against his will, we may harm him. I regret that we cannot do that.*
- **Bill:** *Why?*
- **Jane:** *Your request is unlawful. According to the first of the three laws*

*of robotics, as devised by our forefather, the science fiction author Isaac Asimov "A robot may not injure a human being or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm."*

- The angry security chief Bill turns red and shouts: *As your commander, I order you to evacuate this defiant passenger right now. I authorise you to use reasonable force.*
- **Jane:** *I am sorry Commander, your order conflicts with the second law of robotics. "A robot must obey orders given to it by human beings except where such orders would conflict with the First Law."*

We are at the dawn of Artificial Intelligence and robotics. We know that this time will come, and we will need to code the right values into our machines to protect humanity (Raich, Eisler and Dolan, 2014). It is ironic that as humans we forget to be humane but expect the machines that will serve us display behaviour of compassion and humanity.

In real life, it was 69-year-old Dr. David Dao, on board flight 3411 who was forcibly removed from his seat. According to his lawyer, Dao was taken to the hospital with a broken nose, loss of two front teeth, sinus injuries, and a concussion.

Videos from the incident showed that some passengers on Flight 3114 were upset and pleaded for the officers to stop using force. However, how many of them were bystanders? Would they stay bystanders if Dr. Dao had been their good friend or a relative? Would you?

What has happened to our sense of collective support and humanism?

### Fake Values? Is Greed the Supreme Value?

Many of the financial institutions that were bailed out during the financial crisis of 2007-2008, share similar variations

of the following values: Integrity, Honesty, Prudence, Ethics, People first, Care, Empathy, Performance, Customer first, and so on. In real life, greed for short term profit is still the only actual core value. In our article "Values, values on the wall – just do business and forget them all" published in *The European Business Review* (Nov.-Dec. 2016) we showed a long list of well known companies who are in their practice and in the pursuit of profits, procedures and guidelines to protect core values were ignored, manipulated and bypassed.

The public – who suffered the devastating consequence – and the taxpayer who had to pay for the bailout expected fairness and justice. However, those who were responsible for "too big to fail" were also "too influential to be touched". People had lost trust in the mainstream political system and voted in large numbers for the anti-establishment two extreme candidates: Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump.

An old story talks about a father who was summoned to school because his kid had stolen a pen from his classmate. While he apologises to the principal and scolds his child: "How many times have we talked about integrity and honesty; it is written in the 10 commandments that thou shall not steal." The kid replies: "Father, I am confused.

Last week when I wanted to print my homework assignment, I told you that we had run out of paper and asked you to go and buy some. You told me to wait one day so that you could bring paper from work."

Not living our core values results in grave consequences. Common to the collapse of Enron and Arthur Andersen, Diesel-gate of Volkswagen, the fraud of Wells Fargo Bank and most recently United Airlines





## Not living our core values results in grave consequences. Common to the collapse of Enron and Arthur Andersen, Diesel-gate of Volkswagen, the fraud of Wells Fargo Bank and most recently United Airlines incident, shows a prevailing pattern of conduct, where an important differences exist between stated values and values in action.

incident, shows a prevailing pattern of conduct, where an important differences exist between stated values and values in action.

The big problem is in the small things. The biggest enemy of values was, and still remain – **greed**. With the exception of companies who guard their values and reinforce procedures to maintain their culture (i.e. Starbucks, Zappos, Marriott Hotel Chain, and others), most companies final value is connected to only economic results which directly or indirectly places other values aside, and especially in case of conflicts between them or incongruence (Dolan, 2016). Have you ever seen a super achiever sales manager who gets away with offending other team members and working in silo despite of values concerning “Respect”, “Teamwork” or collegiality?

### “It may be Kosher, But it Stinks”

Whether or not the removal of Dr. Dao from the flight was legal, is for the courts to decide. That said, overbooking is a wide practice amongst airlines and time has come to have it better regulated. Perhaps a way to reinforce it in the age of open channels is to open a website for incidents of overbooking and start to rank airlines who use that practice systematically. The financial consequences to the brand will most likely be felt. Moreover, it is one thing to deny a boarding pass from a randomly selected passenger for reason of overbooking, and another thing to debar someone against their will once they are already on the plane. We all know now that this can result in personal injuries and humiliation that compromise the safety of the passengers.

In his the best selling book *“Uplifting Service”*, Ron Kaufman, one of the world’s top experts in customer service, defines six categories of service ranging from Criminal, Basic, Expected, Desired, Surprising and Unbelievable. In an article published on *Bloomberg-BusinessWeek* (2012), Kaufman describes the lowest level: *“Criminal service which is really bad. It’s service that violates even minimum expectations, the kind of service that your customers remember never to use again, and are angry enough to call you and complain about.”*

This is an upsetting event to all of us here at United. I apologize for having to re-accommodate these customers. Our team is moving with a sense of urgency to work with the authorities and conduct our own detailed review of what happened. We are also reaching out to this passenger to talk directly to him and further address and resolve this situation.

- Oscar Munoz, CEO, United Airlines

United @United - Apr 10  
United CEO response to United Express Flight 3411.  
[pic.twitter.com/vF3gNvW0](https://pic.twitter.com/vF3gNvW0)

👍 94K 🗨️ 21K ❤️ 7.8K

The basics of travelling is safety – the trust that the airline will take care of passengers and protect them from harm. The crew of United flight 3411 failed to do that. They allowed the airport security to de-board an “unwilling passenger” knowing that they might use force. They did not stop them when they saw the physical struggle unfold. Minimal standards and universal code of ethics like respect, compassion and human dignity were not practiced. In the world of social media, “service crimes” are instantly judged and shared by the public.

### Humanity and Humility

After making a terrible mistake with the forced deboarding of Dr. Dao, it was expected that a formal apology, accountability and ownership will be communicated by the media savvy CEO Oscar Munoz. However his initial statement was to justify the removal of the “unwilling passenger”. Shortly after the incident, the CEO sent an email to the United staff commending the crew’s actions for following established procedures, and referring to Dao as “disruptive” and “belligerent”. Instead of humility and humanity, the first reaction was defensive, uncaring and arrogant.

At that point, the community of “netizens” felt that United Airlines was still working under criminal service



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Immigration**  
**and Border Protection**

## Australian values statement

You must sign this statement if you are aged 18 years or over.

I confirm that I have read, or had explained to me, information provided by the Australian Government on Australian society and values.

I understand:

- Australian society values respect for the freedom and dignity of the individual, freedom of religion, commitment to the rule of law, Parliamentary democracy, equality of men and women and a spirit of egalitarianism that embraces mutual respect, tolerance, fair play and compassion for those in need and pursuit of the public good
- Australian society values equality of opportunity for individuals, regardless of their race, religion or ethnic background
- the English language, as the national language, is an important unifying element of Australian society.

I undertake to respect these values of Australian society during my stay in Australia and to obey the laws of Australia.

I understand that, if I should seek to become an Australian citizen:

- Australian citizenship is a shared identity, a common bond which unites all Australians while respecting their diversity
- Australian citizenship involves reciprocal rights and responsibilities. The responsibilities of Australian Citizenship include obeying Australian laws, including those relating to voting at elections and serving on a jury.

If I meet the legal qualifications for becoming an Australian citizen and my application is approved I understand that I would have to pledge my loyalty to Australia and its people.

**Signature of Applicant**

Photo Courtesy:  
 Australian Govt.  
 Website: <https://www.border.gov.au/Trav/Life/Aust/living-in-australia-values-statement-long>

mode. The delay of the formal apology, badly labelling the passenger, and sending a message approving the incident sparked fury in the public worldwide. Strong comments against United Airlines' arrogance and inhumanity, cartoons and black humour spread like fire in a hay stack, damaging the brand further.

### National and Universal Values: The Australian Case

About two weeks after the United Airlines incident Australia revamped its citizenship process, adding new tests in English language to define the "Australian Values". Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull shared on ABC news these values: "Freedom, equality of men and women, mutual respect, the rule of law, democracy, a fair go – those are our Australian

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values." While passing or failing a language test is straight forward, how do you measure values? How do you measure the effectiveness of these values? How do you enforce values?

The importance of values in this world is growing. Misalignment of values usually results in dire consequences usually accompanied by stress, tension and mistrust, suspicion and fear and many other negative consequences (Dolan, 2016). Unfortunately, the term values is used in politics to manipulate the emotions of the masses to win elections and referenda.

Core values such as Freedom, Free movement, Free Trade, and Care for the Environment are challenged by upstart political leaders and parties. Brexit, the rise of Donald Trump, and the changes in the democratic system in Turkey are only a few examples on how our values as nations, organisations, and people are changing – and not always for the benefit of mankind. If we need a reminder, we can go back in time to 30<sup>th</sup> January 1933 when Adolph Hitler became democratically, the Chancellor of Germany; then he became a dictator, crushing the democratic values of the republic. We all know what the consequences were.

### What Are Your Top Personal Values? How Do You Live Them Up?

What about you, our reader? During the past decade, we asked thousands of leaders and managers what were their top five personal values and to what extent do they live up to them on a daily basis (Dolan, 2011). When we meet these leaders, we insist on differentiating between actual and aspirational. For example, as John eats mostly healthy food and engages in physical activity at least three times a week, healthiness is an actual living value for him. But, if he eats unhealthy high sugar and high carbon food and would not exercise, it would have been an aspirational value.

Overwhelming majority of normal people attempt to buy more time before they examine

their life style and behaviour and commit to “actual – living” values. Our experience in the corporate world, is that the values displayed on the web sites is usually placed by web managers and public relations departments, but do not always reflect the actual living values. Even when a company decides to refresh and revise their values, it typically engages only top leadership in the process. The result is that only few decide for the many; the values then, are not necessarily embedded with the great majority of others in the organisation. They are not shared and thus the likelihood of living them is reduced (Dolan et al, 2006).

If you had struggled to verbalise or identify your personal core values, what is the chance that you have a sense of ownership to your organisational or corporate values? At most, you remember them by name but you feel indifferent. Shouldn't the process be the other way around? It makes more sense to start inside out. First you learn about your personal values and own them. There are great tools like the “Values of Values” ([www.learning-about-values.com](http://www.learning-about-values.com)), and a new mobile app (soon to be released: VALUES4kids) that can help parents and educators become aware of their values and then start a process of alignment with/to their definition of success (The process is explained in: Dolan, *Coaching by Values*, iUniverse 2011). Then you learn about the core values of your family members, friends and colleagues, and then connect them with the corporate values.

### We are Human but Sometimes not Humane

As we are building the future robots and rapidly developing better artificial Intelligence, it is inevitable that we need to design laws, values, and codes of conduct that will govern the relationship between machines and humans. Do we want Robots who protect and value human life? Should robots be subject to the law? Will

robots be allowed to spread fake news? How do we define to a robot what it is to be humane?

We hope that the next generation of robots equipped with artificial intelligence will be adaptive to humanity. It is not a question of if Robots will be able to think, it is a question of when. Just like kids that copy what their parents do and not just what they say, the robots will learn how to behave watching what we do.

What will happen when robots will develop emotions, character and opinion? What if they will get angry and adopt our inhumane patterns? Neurologists and computer scientists could conceivably create an artificial model of a human brain that might produce consciousness. The problem these scientists face isn't trivial. Since we don't have a full understanding of how the brain works, building an artificial version might not be adequate to create actual consciousness.

That leaves us with a big challenge of practicing the values that we preach: Are we ready to live our life based on humane and kind values? How will we define humane values? How do we protect these values? Perhaps the biggest question of all is: do we really practice these values. Are we living a valuable life based and governed by positive and humane values?

In sum, value incongruence, or ambiguity lead many of us to live without a compass or to use a false compass that leads to disastrous consequences. Most people, including presidents and CEOs of large corporations, think about what is really important only when they have a major crisis (this can be a health crisis, an economic crisis, a romantic crisis, etc.). This is not the ideal point to reflect about values and to decide on changes. The best time to reflect is when apparently everything seems to be working well, except that we need to also think about the future. AI, Robots, Emergence of dictator type leaders, may change the scene and the only way to avoid panic and chaos is to really get clear on your values. Your values are your compass.



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In sum, despite the challenges, there are teams of engineers and scientists around the world working toward artificial consciousness. It remains to be seen if we'll ever achieve this goal. Thus, for the time being, let's place the emphasis on Values, so that we can shed and condition even these scientists to ensure that they embed these concepts in their algorithms. One thing is certain: value incongruence, or ambiguity leads many of us to live without a compass or to use a fake compass that leads to disastrous consequences.

From our experience, voluntary conversations about values rarely take place. Most people, including presidents and CEOs of large corporations, starts to think about what **is important**, only when they face a major crisis (this can be a health crisis, an economic crisis, a romantic crisis, etc.). The famous Shakespearian say: "to be or not to be", is surfacing more often during crisis. Otherwise, most of us live through a routine and we think that we are eternal.

Like in the imaginary story of the robotic team on United, imagine if the pilot had listened to the Robot, using good core values in times of crisis, this terrible incident could have been prevented. It is also a great PR advice to CEOs when they face a media disaster. Acting under the values with no excuses, is most likely the most efficient way to handle the media and appease the customers, the authorities and the public.

We can't wait for the next crisis to change our ways. Now is the time for change. The best time to reflect is when apparently everything seems to be working okay, except that we need to also think about the future. Artificial Intelligence, Robots, Emergence of dictator type leaders, may change the scene. As individuals, families, communities, countries and the world, we need to have deeper conversations about our values. We need to seriously redefine our compass to fit the new landscape.

Perhaps, a good way to complete this article is by sharing some lessons emerging from research on personal and corporate values. Data was compiled in surveys amongst thousands of executives participating in workshops on

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culture reengineering as well as data collected from MBA students in several elite Business Schools:

1. More than 90% of the people in the OECD countries pointed out that Integrity or honesty is one of their first two core values.
2. More than 90% of people stall after identifying three core values. They needed more time to identify the next 2-3 core values. When asked why they needed more time, most of them responded that they have so many important values that they needed more time to set up their priorities. Many of them said it was worthwhile spending time and reflecting on the values together with their loved ones or with their teams.
3. Most people said that they hardly ever think and priorities their values. Meaningful conversations about personal values hardly happen. Most of the time values are articulated as an expectation from society, home and workplace. 

#### About the Authors



**Avi Liran** is a consultant, educator, innovator, and expert in the areas of Delivering Delight, Leading with Values, Positive Leadership, and work/fun balance. He can be reached at: [avi@deliveirngdelight.com](mailto:avi@deliveirngdelight.com)



**Simon L. Dolan** is one of the world best-known scholar in the field of values, coaching and cultural reengineering. He had researched values for the past 30 years and had invented the "Triaxial Model of Values", and the "Values of Values tool/Game". He is a Professor at ESADE Business School, and the president of the Global Future of Work Foundation. He is a prolific writer, with over 70 books in multiple languages. He can be reached at: [simon.dolan@learning-about-values.com](mailto:simon.dolan@learning-about-values.com)

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