

# How does identification with an organization enhance values?

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Strongly identifying with an organization or workplace can change people's lives in profound ways, according to a new study in the *Journal of Consumer Research*.

"Managers often hope that consumers identify with organizations they regularly patronize, and firms sometimes encourage labor to encourage employees to identify with firms they work for, because in both cases organizations benefit from such identification," write authors Melea Press and Eric J. Arnould (both University of Wyoming, Laramie). The authors focus on identification formation from the perspective of consumers, whose personal, economic, and social lives are affected by organizations.

The authors conducted interviews with consumers who had recently joined a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program. They also interviewed employees at an advertising agency, at all levels from receptionist to CEO.

In the interviews, the authors learned how consumers learn to integrate values and behaviors from within and beyond the organization, often in life-changing ways. "So, a new CSA member learns how and why he should appreciate locally grown organic vegetables, and then begins to find additional opportunities to buy other organic and locally made products more generally," the authors explain.

"Similarly, an employee learns the value of making clear, considered,

and creative choices and brings that value into her [personal life](#) as she reduces her consumer debt and even makes better choices for [romantic partners](#)," the authors explain.

For some [consumers](#), identification comes suddenly, as an epiphany, whereas others take more gradual paths, emulating [mentors](#) who are forging new ways of living. For example, over time, a CSA member who was a workaholic could use his experience with the organization to help assess his lifestyle and end up dramatically cutting back his work schedule to spend time with his family.

**More information:** Melea Press and and Eric J. Arnould. "How Does Organizational Identification Form? A Consumer Behavior Perspective." Published online May 11, 2011. Journal of Consumer Research: December 2011. [ejcr.org](#)

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