

Take Your Organization to the Next Level

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Have you worked within organizations where productivity was not what you knew it could be? Have you witnessed resignation and cynicism among your team members? Have you tried to implement stronger performance measurements, incentives, and more resources such as training and additional staff and yet you still don't obtain the productivity that you believe is possible? Tracking performance measures, providing training and additional resources such as staff, and implementing new incentive programs are all very useful approaches. However, they are primarily focused on what you and your people need to "do". I suggest that you also look at who you and your people are "being". What kind of leadership are you providing? Are team members speaking authentically to each other? Is there a clear vision and is everyone aligned around that vision?

The first step for you, as the leader, is to take a hard look at your vision for the organization. Do you know what you want to create? Do you have the ability to articulate this vision in a clear and concise manner that can be easily understood by all levels within your organization? Do all of your team members have that same vision? Do you demonstrate every day in your actions and in your communications that you are committed to creating this vision?

Steve Covey, in *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, says that you need to start with the end in mind. If you want your organization to be a certain size, achieve certain results, operate in a certain manner, you need to be able to visualize that now so that you can start to create it.

The next step is to clearly articulate your own core values. Are you a person who values others and wants to build an organization through working with a leadership team of people who care about each other and your employees? Is it important to you to provide continuous improvement around quality products and services? Do you put much of your attention into creating financial reserves and financial independence? Do you value peace and integrity? These are all core values and it is critically important that you, as the leader of your organization, get clear on your own core values.

Once you have clearly assessed your own core values, you can now create a vision that is in alignment with those values. When Tom Watson, the founder of IBM, was asked how in the world he started a company like IBM, he said that he visualized from the very

beginning what a large company would look like, the kind of people that would work for IBM, the kind of customers they would have. How they would treat those customers, the kind of products they would sell, what kind of quality the products would have, the value to customers doing business with IBM. When Tom Watson had the answers to these questions he then had a clear vision for what he wanted to create. After that, it was simply a matter of aligning that vision with his own core values and articulating his vision in a way that others could understand. Then he was able to start to fulfill that vision by having his day-to-day activities, from the very beginning, be in alignment with that vision.

These are the kinds of questions we must all answer in order to get a clear picture of what we want to create for our organization so that we can take the organization to the next level. We need to articulate these in a manner that is so vivid, so descriptive, and so measurable, that all of our key contributors can understand them. If we can paint a clear picture for others, it is easy to see who can align themselves with this vision. It is easier to determine who can buy-in and who should be on the team, and, more importantly, who should not be on the team. It is then easier to get our day-to-day activities in alignment with this vision.

On occasion, we, as business leaders, have made poor strategic business decisions. We have launched an inappropriate product line or we brought in a key player who did not fulfill our expectations. Often these challenges have resulted from our own lack of clarity about our values and our vision. In these situations, we may have been “doing” the right things but we have not been “being” the leader our organization needed us to be.

When we have crystal clear clarity about our values and our vision, it is easy to make solid business decisions that are in alignment with those values and vision.

After we have shifted our focus from not just what you need to “do” but to also include who we need to “be”, we can now find the balance between these two approaches. Both are critical to our organization’s success. Once you have the clear vision for your organization, it is now appropriate to develop performance measures, financial and productivity goals and objectives and other support structures to ensure that our vision is translated into specific and measurable goals that can be tracked. If you can’t measure it, you can’t manage it.

A large unit of a major high tech company was recently spun off. The reason for the spin-off was because all other units of this high tech company were extremely profitable and were growing rapidly but this piece of the business was faltering. Their results were affecting the entire organization’s value. Their profitability and performance were poor. Can you imagine why this occurred when the other parts of this same business were so

successful?

I say it occurred because the vision of the President /CEO of that unit of the company was not in alignment with his day-to-day actions nor with the day-to-day actions of his senior leadership team. He said he had a clear vision of what this 30,000-person organization needed to achieve to be successful. But when breakdowns occurred in commitments made or in day-to-day communications he not only did not try to remove those breakdowns, he himself, got caught up in the breakdowns. These were not breakdowns related to product lines, global directions, or other major initiatives although these “big picture” issues were affected by the breakdowns occurring. These breakdowns related to simple things. The breakdowns related to saying one thing and doing another. This leader said that he had a vision of an organization that was truly transformed, that was entrepreneurial, that was highly energized and creative, that could be responsive to their customers and be flexible to meet the needs of those customers. He said all the right things.

But who he was “being” was not someone who believed in that vision or was willing to commit to that vision. In meetings with his senior leadership team, he did not communicate this vision, and when individual members did try to get their actions in alignment with this vision or remind the leadership team of where they were not, as a team, in alignment with this vision, they got bumped from the agenda or they were cut off or not really heard. The president and most of his senior leadership team were focused solely on what they needed to “do” to turn this organization around. They put very little emphasis on what they needed to “be”. They simply did not walk their talk.

Now their business is being spun off and a new leadership team is being formed. Their careers have been negatively affected by their inability to walk their talk. To focus not on just what they had to “do” but who they needed to “be”.

Once you have clearly communicated your vision and you have been coached to get your day-to-day activities in alignment with that vision, you simply need to ask all current and prospective team members if their values are in alignment with your vision. You should explain to them that alignment with this vision is now a requirement to be on the team. You can ask them to demonstrate to you on a day-to-day basis that they are, in fact, in alignment with your vision. If you raise the bar around your expectations of them, clearly over-communicate what your expectations are and put support structures in place to measure these expectations on a regular basis and ask your team members “what will it take to get in alignment with this vision?” your team members will either get into alignment or they will self-select out of your organization. It will be easy for them to make those determinations and you won’t be required to push them out. They will see it for themselves. By focusing on who you need to “be” as the leader of your organization, your key players will also shift in who they need to “be”.