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LEADERSHIP Excellence

MARCH 2007

THE MAGAZINE OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT, MANAGERIAL EFFECTIVENESS, AND ORGANIZATIONAL PRODUCTIVITY

Bold Dreams

They Unite and
Motivate People

What Is True Success?

Brand Your Leadership Development

You Can Win the Race for Talent

Jim Collins
Best Selling
Author

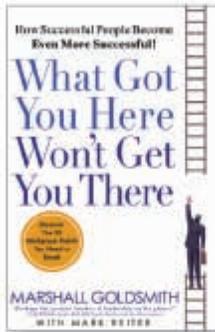
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—Stephen R. Covey, Author of *The 8th Habit*



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—Warren Bennis, Distinguished Professor of Business, University of Southern California, and bestselling author

“As the CEO of the Girl Scouts, I was working to help a great organization be ‘the best that we could be.’ The first person Marshall volunteered to work with was me—this sent an important message. I was exuberant about the experience, I improved, and we moved this process across the organization. Twenty-four years later, I am Chairman of the Leader to Leader Institute—and we are still working together to serve leaders.”

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“Marshall’s valuable insights on leadership development and the related responsibilities of coaching and mentoring are critical to our general officers and their spouses. These are turbulent times, and the tools and techniques that Marshall shared with them are therefore vitally important as they return to their various commands and leadership responsibilities.”

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What Got You Here Won't Get You There

MARSHALL GOLDSMITH WITH MARK REITER

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LEADERSHIP Excellence



THE MAGAZINE OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT, MANAGERIAL EFFECTIVENESS, AND ORGANIZATIONAL PRODUCTIVITY

VOL. 24 NO. 3

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Successful Approach

Your approach to leadership may be bold as you go for the goal, but monitor your success rate and brand your development so that you cultivate sound judgment and lean thinking and learn the lessons of wins and losses.

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Leadership Excellence Plan

It's the new template for your development.



by Ken Shelton

WHEN YOU ARE trying to do something—and what could be more worthwhile to do at work than developing your leadership—it's smart to start with a plan.

Indeed, the old aphorism—*plan your work, work your plan*—still applies.

Over the years, I have seen several good leadership development plans that are specific to a certain role, style, function, team, organization, industry, or military unit. The Marines, for example, have a great plan for developing Marines. And most organizations have some semblance of a plan for developing "leaders like us."

For years, we have recognized the need to have a more universal template that takes into account the personal side of leadership and enables you to create your own development plan or to customize a plan for your team or organization.

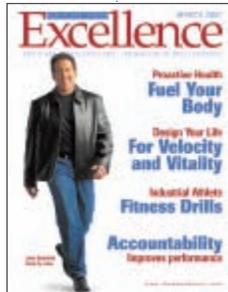
I finally feel we are ready to introduce the *Leadership Excellence Plan* and make it the centerpiece of our *Excellence Performance System*.

The four quadrants of the plan—two on the personal side and two on the team and organization side of leadership—parallel our four monthly magazines.

Personal Side of Leadership

Unless you start with the personal side of leadership, you build on a foundation of sand. The lives of many leaders melt once they experience the heat of the position. Hence, we provide two resources to develop character, competence, and resilience:

- *Health and Fitness Excellence, The Magazine of Body Leadership*. In this monthly magazine (now in its 2nd year), we package the best and latest thinking on seven dimensions of personal wellness and performance.



Body Leadership



Life Leadership



Team Leadership



Organization Leadership

- *Personal Excellence, The Magazine of Life Leadership*. In this monthly magazine (now in its 12th year), we provide the best and latest thinking on seven dimensions of whole-life growth, improvement, progress, and positive change.

So, our personal leadership resources emphasize the discipline of appetites, passions, compulsions, and obsessions and the development of habits, attitudes, and behaviors that bring out the best in you.

Organization Side of Leadership

Once you start or join a team or organization, you become a member of a performance unit that delivers some kind of product or service. This requires you to work with other people who are, hopefully, engaged and aligned behind a common purpose. So, we provide two resources to develop *esprit de corps*, execution, and team excellence:

- *Sales and Service Excellence, The Magazine of Team Leadership*. In this monthly magazine (now in its 7th year), we package the best and latest thinking on seven dimensions of sales and service team performance (since all members of a team have a role to play in these vital areas—whether they know it or not).

- *Leadership Excellence, The Magazine of Organization Leadership*. In this monthly magazine (now in its 24th year), we provide the best and latest thinking on seven dimensions of management and leadership of teams and organizations with an emphasis on the timely application of timeless principles.

To access our new *Leadership Excellence Plan*, visit the home page of our website www.LeaderExcel.com and click on the *LEP*

icon. You may also want to explore the online article archive.

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Ken Shelton
Editor since 1984

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Failure or Fallure

What constitutes true success?



by Jim Collins

SOME OF MY MOST valuable lessons about leadership and life have come from a special classroom: the sheer rock walls of Colorado and the towering cliffs Yosemite Valley.

In this laboratory of personal challenge—hanging by fingertips from little edges, tethered to a great partner, confronting fear and discovering personal weaknesses (and an occasional strength)—I’ve come to see the *pursuit of excellence* as a quite different concept than *pursuit of the summit*.

In fact, some of the proudest days come in not reaching the top, and some of the most disappointing days come with summit success.

* * * * *

Matt and I stood below an absolutely beautiful sheet of rock—smooth and overhanging, with a finger-tip sized seam splitting the middle of the grey-and-silver granite wall. “You can see why I named the route Crystal Ball,” Matt said, pointing to a baseball-sized quartzite handhold 50 feet up the climb.

We roped up, and I set off up the route, shooting for an on-sight ascent. An “on-sight” means that on your first try you lead the climb without any prior information about the moves. For you, the route is an entirely blank page—no matter how many other climbers have ascended the route. Once you start to climb, if you blow it (and thereby fall onto the rope), you’ve forever lost the on-sight.

Ten feet below the crystal, my feet began to skitter, slipping off slick pebbles, and I curled my thumb around a little edge, thinking to myself, “If I can just get a little weight off my fingers . . .”

The adrenaline made me over-grip every hold, sapping strength I would need higher on the climb. A hard sport climb is a race to the top before you run out of power; moves that would be easy if they came at the bottom are much harder when found higher on the route when you hit those moves already fatigued. As climbers like to

say, “the clock is ticking” from the moment you leave the ground. You only have so many minutes and seconds before your fingers uncurl off the holds, and you plummet down until (hopefully) the rope catches.

“Breathe, Jim. Relax.” Matt’s voice soothed me for a moment.

I gathered a bit of composure, while hooking my thumb and resting my fingers, trying to get my breathing to settle down. But to little avail. My mind chattered away: “Not sure whether to go right hand or left hand to the sideways edge above . . . If I get it wrong,



no way I can reverse . . . and even if I get it right, I’m not sure I’ll have enough power to pull up to the crystal ball . . . and if I can’t get to the crystal ball, there’s no way I’ll be able to get the rope clipped into the next point of protection . . . how far would I fall? But I don’t like to take big falls . . .”

Tick, tick, tick—the clock ran on while I hesitated.

“OK, Matt, here I go.”

Right hand to the side pull. Left foot to the edge.

Uh oh, wrong call. I should have gone to the edge with my left hand! I rolled my body to the left, groping for an edge, a pebble, a wrinkle—something, anything—that would allow me to pop my right hand up and move my left onto the side edge. I smushed my right fingers into a little edge that pointed down and sideways—the wrong direction for a good pull. I now had a less than 20 percent chance of success. If I tried to make the move up,

I’d almost certainly fall. Even if I did manage to surge upward, the higher I went without making the next bolt clip, the bigger the eventual fall. (To “clip” means to get the rope into the carabiner hanging off a protection bolt. If you fall when leading, you descend about 2.5 times as far as the distance to your last successful clip.)

“Off!” I called down to Matt.

“No,” he yelled back. “You’re only three moves from the crystal.”

“OFF!” I repeated, with angry emphasis.

And I let go, dropping onto the rope in a nicely controlled fall.

I hung on the rope for about 10 minutes, recovering, and then swung toward the rock on the end of the rope, pulled myself back on to the holds and climbed to the top. But of course it didn’t count. I hadn’t done a clean on-sight. And even though later in the day, I managed to ascend the route from bottom to top in one shot—a success by most measures—I had nonetheless failed. When confronted with the moment of commitment, the moment of decision, the moment of go-for-it on the on-sight . . . well, I let go. I went to failure, not fallure.

* * * * *

Failure and fallure. The difference is subtle, but it is all the difference in the world. In fallure, you still fail to get up the route, but you never let go. Going to fallure means full 100 percent commitment to go up, despite the odds against you. You’ll only find your true limit when you go to fallure, not failure. Sure, I had less than a 20 percent chance of pulling through to the crystal ball, but because I let go, I’ll never know for sure. Perhaps I would have had an extra reserve, perhaps I would have surprised myself and had an extra bit of power to hang on for one more move. Or perhaps—and this turned out to be true—the very next hold is better than it looks. And that’s the rub. It’s the ambiguity—about the holds, the moves, the ability to clip the rope—that makes 100 percent commitment on the on-sight so difficult.

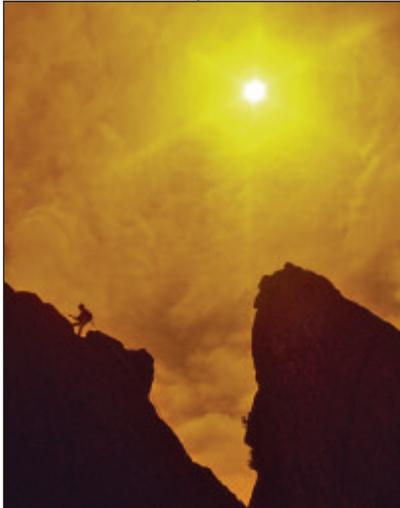
One of my mentors, the design guru Sara Little Turnbull, built a distinguished career as a design consultant to major corporations. (The Corporate Design Foundation once described her as “the CEOs’ secret weapon in product design.”) Turnbull once told me that some of her best designs came when she was on the brink of a failed concept but didn’t let go. Of course, many—indeed, most—

of her brink-of-failure designs ended up being failures. But every once in a while, by not letting go, she would push herself to a completely different level, and something extraordinary would come about. "And, of course, that's when breakthroughs happen," she told me. "If you don't stretch, you don't know where the edge is."

Fallure, not failure.

Business Example

Some of the best business leaders in history intuitively understood this idea. **Darwin Smith** made a fallure versus failure decision in vaulting his company to greatness. For 100 years, **Kimberly-Clark** languished in mediocrity, with most of its business in traditional coated paper mills. Smith realized that the company's best shot at greatness lay in the paper-based



consumer goods arena, where it had a side business called Kleenex. But how to get the company to fully commit to making the consumer business great, when the bulk of the company's history and revenues lay in the traditional industrial paper mills?

Like the general who burned the boats upon landing, leaving no retreat for his soldiers, Smith decided to sell the mills. He would sell even the mill in Kimberly, Wisconsin, and throw all the proceeds into the consumer business, going head to head with consumer rivals Scott Paper and Procter & Gamble. Wall Street derided him, the business media called the move stupid, and the analysts wrote merciless commentary. But in the end, Smith's decision paid off. Kimberly-Clark became the number-one paper-based consumer products company in the world, eventually beating Procter & Gamble in six of eight product categories. Of course, there was no guarantee that Kimberly-Clark would succeed in the consumer business—it could have taken a huge leader fall—but Smith understood the only path to success lay in a full commitment to climb to fallure.

Go to Fallure

I now see life as a series of choices between going to failure or fallure.

Like an on-sight attempt, the next

holds in life remain unclear, ambiguous. And that very ambiguity holds us back from making a fully committed attempt. We fail mentally. We let go. We take a nice controlled fall, rather than risking a bigger fall. But as with most hard sport climbs, going to fallure in life is scary, but not dangerous. Whether it be starting a business or publishing a book or trying an exciting new design, fallure rarely means doom. And most important, the only way to find your true limit is to go to fallure, not failure.

Facing 50, my body does not allow me to pull as hard on holds as when I was 20. But I've since learned that what you lose in physical strength you can gain by increasing your mental strength.

I've even redefined "success" less in terms of getting to the top and more in terms of the quality of my mental effort. I keep a record on my Palm Pilot of my hard on-sight attempts. A recent listing reads:

HARD ON-SIGHT ATTEMPT LOG

REACH THE TOP:	24
CLIMB TO FALLURE:	18
FAILURE (LET GO/QUIT):	16
TOTAL ATTEMPTS:	58
% SUCCESS RATE: (TOP + FALLURE)	72%

Note that I calculate the "success rate" not just as the percentage of times to the top, but the percentage of times to the top *plus* percentage of times to fallure. During a recent climbing session, I did not make it to the top of a single route. Not one. Still, it was one of my most successful days of climbing ever, because I went to fallure on every single attempt. I felt good on the way home because my mind felt strong that day, compared to the weak feeling on most days. For in the end, climbing is not about conquering the rock; it is about conquering yourself. This is what fallure is all about. LE

Jim Collins is author of Good to Great and co-author of Built to Last. This article was adapted for Leadership Excellence from Jim Collins' chapter "Hitting the Wall" from the book Upward Bound, Edited by Michael Useem, Jerry Useem and Paul Asel (Crown Press). Visit www.jimcollins.com.

ACTION: Monitor your success rate.

Branded Developers

They think differently.



by Jon Younger, Norm Smallwood and Dave Ulrich

THE COMPANIES WE CALL *BRANDED developers* have a track record of excellence in leadership development and turn this reputation into a source of competitive advantage in recruiting, engaging, and retaining employees.

Branded developers enjoy powerful benefits. They recruit at lower cost, have first pick of the best employees, and achieve higher retention. They create a deep talent bench, enabling them to drive organic growth. Investors often reward them with a valuation premium because they instill confidence and keep performance promises. Customers prefer to deal with them, as employees who know them get things done and nature long-term relationships.

Branded developer think differently about people and careers in 10 ways:

1. *Branded developers hire for people, not jobs.* For them, recruiting is about finding great people, not filling positions. They look for talented individuals who make long-term contributions as effective business and functional leaders. As a result, they think differently about the qualities most important in those they hire, and often hire employees with unconventional backgrounds or experience. Because they hire for talent, not positions, the hiring process is more rigorous.

Branded developers use three tests to assess prospects: Do they have the capability to succeed here? What is their potential for leadership? What is the cultural and values fit: Is he or she like us? Values congruence is particularly important. The websites of branded developers represent their history, values, and the unique competencies they seek.

2. *They hire special role players.* Although branded developers primarily hire employees at entry levels, they also seek aptitude for future leadership. Individuals typically enter early development programs offering rotational

work experience and education.

However, not all professional hires are entry-level. “Gap experts” are also sought to add critical capability or to jump start a new function or business. For example, GE hired six sigma experts, and Exxon recruited senior experts in OD. These senior hires often find it difficult to feel like a full member of the “club.” Unlike colleagues who share a common history and values, gap experts are inserted at a higher level. However, lacking a strong internal network, many report difficulty in getting things done. Cultures are relatively intolerant of “outsiders.” As a result, the attrition rate for gap experts is greater.

3. They have well-developed career architectures. Branded developers are career architects and engineers. They are clear about the relationship between high performance and career progress. Their career paths are fairly simple. For example, at McKinsey, the consulting career path consists of five progressive roles: associate, engagement manager, associate principal, partner, and director. Many organizations have career paths. What differentiates branded developers is the care with which they design them, implement them, and use them as a means to develop their people.

4. They have a plan in mind. The essence of career planning in branded developers is a focus on the future. They tend to think two or three roles ahead in planning the careers of top talent. They create a multi-tiered process of talent review and development planning and create a meaningful development path through the right set of experiences. For example, at Exxon Mobil, succession planning is linked through a lattice of talent committees; the profiles of high-potential individuals float up, and the next moves of high-potential managers are discussed by the senior executive team.

5. They give more people more opportunity. As a result of their knowledge of their talent, branded developers provide more opportunity to more people. Although job-posting systems are typical, at professional and leadership levels, high-performing people in one line division might be “invited” to take on a different role in another division. Or, a line manager may be asked to take a rotation into a support function such as HR.

Their emphasis on performance management and assessment of potential provides managers with greater visibility into the strengths

and limitations of individuals. They have tested these individuals in a range of situations, and know what developmental roles make sense. Their emphasis on talent development and retention provides bench strength that mediates risk. By maintaining strong expertise on teams, they can move talented individuals outside their expertise and develop them in new areas.

6. They have a different career contract. Branded developers encourage greater movement because they see careers differently. They see work assignments as “stops” on a career journey. Roles are to be put on and taken off as people progress. In turn, their employees willingly accept regular assignment and location changes because their personal risk is reduced. They believe the company has in mind their best interests and organizational



needs. They have confidence that movement is sensible, not capricious. And, they count on the basic employment contract: that the “get” for “giving” career movement is continued development and some measure of security so long as they perform well. For example, Exxon Mobil informally operates according to the one-in-four rule: “You can say no to one career move in four that’s offered you.”

7. They continually test people. Branded developers continually test a person’s potential. In fact, potential is the measure of how people perform in test roles. Employees at PepsiCo describe career management in that company as career pinball: “winners get to play again.”

Branded developers often use *rocket jobs* to assess high-potential people, prepare them for greater responsibility, and propel advancement. We find four types of rocket jobs: 1) business or functional leadership, 2) project and new business initiatives, 3) turn-arounds of a struggling market or unit, and 4) relationship or team building across businesses, geography, and cul-

ture. Not all rocket jobs offer vertical progression—often they provide lateral or “diagonal” career movement. Career paths combines steep vertical moves with periodic lateral or diagonal assignments.

8. They take a hard look at talent at multiple points or career stages. The first hard look follows completion of the early development program or internship. The two basic questions are: “Have they established credibility and a reputation for getting things done?” and “Do they live the company’s values?” Those lacking the right stuff are either let go or leave on their own. The second point, after a few years, is whether they show evidence of business or technical leadership. Individuals who don’t distinguish themselves may not be pushed out, but they are likely to leave or move into a new role or function. By contrast, employees with perceived leadership aptitude and interest are usually invited to take a supervisory role. The third hard look is whether the person has or can develop the capability to play a strategic leadership role. They leapfrog colleagues and move through progressively more challenging roles. They relocate more often to gain broader perspective and to be seen and evaluated.

9. They engage in job sculpting. The career philosophy of branded developers creates far greater flexibility in role and organization design. Because they are focused on both capability acceleration and business performance, roles are often “sculpted” to the individual. Roles are custom-designed to assess how well the person leads. This is a mixed blessing. On one hand, it creates powerful developmental opportunity. On the other, it often creates volatility.

10. They preserve the elements of branded development. Building a brand for development is hard won but easily lost. The forces of competition, new technology, consolidation, and transformation create a high hurdle. So, branded developers tend to be firms that depend on technical excellence, where decisions have long-term horizons and leaders can’t easily be imported. They also have confidence in their culture and way of working. Many companies aspire to become branded developers since they must find a path to attract and retain quality employees. LE

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ACTION: Become a branded people developer.

Lawyer CEOs

Law is a path to the top.



by Kathryn Griffin

THE SEARCH FOR LEADERSHIP talent has similar stakes and risks as a top business opportunity.

In today's risk-conscious business environment, the governance reforms driven by Sarbanes-Oxley have fused the connective tissue and interests of C-Suite leaders. Now, the CEO, General Counsel, CFO, CIO, COO, and Chief Risk Officer must overcome traditional gaps in each function and work collaboratively and transparently to assess and mitigate legal and operational risks to the enterprise.

The General Counsel role has been magnified as companies insert risk-mitigation practices into their product, service, technology, and regulatory touch-points with consumers, employees, shareholders, analysts, and regulators. This shift is forcing leaders to understand the increased influence of the General Counsel, and why other senior leaders' ability to work with the top corporate lawyer is becoming a measure of their potential.

The mounting legal demands and external pressures on leaders today are moving more organizations to promote or recruit business lawyers to the CEO post. Risk is redrawing the lines of corporate management structure.

Legal issues—ranging from product liability and regulatory compliance to patent infringement, discrimination and stock options backdating—threaten to erode shareholder confidence and market share. The unprecedented decline in shareholder trust—given the headlines and mounting concern about corporate scandals and ongoing government investigations—has caused CEOs and Board Directors to look for leadership solutions within the ranks of top business lawyers.

Today's environment makes the business of recruiting a General Counsel, or a Chief Legal Officer, more consequential to the future of corporate leadership and the fulfillment of shareholder expectations.

The failure to anticipate and manage a company's legal exposure, or to effectively

protect shareholder interests, and manage in times of crisis, can quickly damage a company's brand and reputation, affect the bottom line, and determine the success or failure of the organization. As leadership becomes more complex, the skills and perspectives that top business lawyers bring to strategy and leadership is becoming highly valued."

Citigroup, BET, General Dynamics and Pfizer, to name just a few, are now led by CEOs who once served and built their impressive business credentials either in the corporate General Counsel role or as a business lawyer.

General Counsel Becomes Key Advisor

One key leadership measure for CEOs, is the degree to which they either have engaged their top corporate lawyer in strategic business discussions and decision-making, or left him or her



out of the leadership loop, as was common until recent years when scandal and governance reform changed the prevailing wisdom.

Today, most CEOs would not run the risk of managing tough business challenges in circumstances where there is an arm's length relationship with their General Counsel. And there are few, if any, corporate executives equipped to offer advice on how to navigate choppy business or potentially murky legal waters better than a General Counsel who can work effectively at the right hand of the CEO.

The best corporate Generals Counsel are so closely tied to the work of the CEO that they're capturing an unparalleled view and understanding

of critical business issues that drive or influence the business. It's a front-row seat on the CEO role and an extraordinary training ground for the top job.

The challenge of CEO leadership, says LandAmerica Financial Group CEO Theodore L. Chandler, Jr., who comes from the business lawyer ranks, is like whitewater rafting. "To compete and excel," he says, "you need the best people in the raft with you, including a General Counsel with a multidisciplinary view of the company."

Alfred Mockett, CEO of Austin-based Motive, a leading provider of management automation software, recalls that the task of searching for a new General Counsel for his former company, American Management Systems, was like "looking for a shadow CEO."

The corporate General Counsel now plays into the CEO succession plan like never before. Companies have begun to realize that the person they recruit into the General Counsel role must be someone capable of one day assuming the CEO role. If the General Counsel is perceived to be a strategic business thinker and savvy leader, that's going to buy the organization good support from Wall Street analysts, investors, the marketplace, and employees alike.

On the Path to CEO

I expect to see more top corporate lawyers make the move to CEO. The marketplace is forcing CEOs to think more like lawyers, and lawyers to think more like business leaders with a broader view of the organization, its market, competitors, and people.

This could go down as the decade when the corporate lawyer is the top candidate for the CEO suite. The current shape of a successful CEO's skills align well with the skill-sets of a business lawyer: strategic thinker, quick study, cool under fire, bias for action, critical thinker, grasp of Sarbanes-Oxley, and the communications veteran.

When it comes to recruiting top business lawyers, it's no longer just, "We need a General Counsel, and let's fill that role." The CEO and Board now look to the General Counsel to be their legal counsel, trusted strategic advisor, and possible next CEO; and so the demands of the job and the search for the best legal talent will intensify in identifying, assessing, and choosing the right candidate.

LE

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ACTION: Consider your next CEO.

Bold Dreams

These unite people.



by Lance Secretan

OVER THE LAST 50 years, we've become experts in quantification, measurement, and analysis. We have metrics for everything. But many leaders have lost their capacity to dream. Instead, they create mission, vision, and values statements. Compared to the inspiring power of a dream, a mission statement feels stale and barren.

A dream is the unifying experience that all winning teams, great endeavors, and extraordinary achievements have in common. A dream is the unique shared characteristic among people who achieve the extraordinary—creating revolutions, overthrowing despots, founding nations, climbing Everest, reinventing organizations, making breakthroughs, or changing the way we live or think. Each of these is initially powered and then sustained by the passion of a dream.

I'm not talking about a six sigma program or 5 percent improvement in employee satisfaction—but a bold, daring, impudent, audacious, outrageous, thrilling, inspiring dream.

Dream Power

How did we land a man on the moon? Jack Kennedy had a dream that millions embraced, making it their own and making it real. Indeed, the dream was so powerful that it restored America's self-esteem after the launch of Sputnik, galvanized the nation, and inspired the rest of the world. Dreams transcend differences, disagreements, and petty arguments and engage us in a higher purpose, uniting us as one. It is this elusive oneness for which we all yearn. Dreams are almost unique in their power to achieve oneness.

Great historical leaders—Christ, Buddha, Lao-Tzu, Confucius, Mohammed, Nelson Mandela, Mother Teresa, and Martin Luther King, Jr., among them—all knew how impactful a dream can be. In his famous 1963 speech at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC, King repeated the

phrase "I have a dream" eight times. His ability to articulate his dream united and inspired millions of people to usher in a new era in civil rights. Dreams have the power to change the world.

To understand how leadership can transform organizations, communities, countries, or the world, we must understand and harness the power of the dream.

Since 1996, I've worked with leaders worldwide by sharing a philosophy we call *Higher Ground Leadership*, the goal being to change the world by reawakening spirit and values in both profes-



sional and personal lives. We've achieved some amazing results. Yet for years, we focused on the processes rather than outcomes with our clients—in other words, the means rather than the dream. Although we were realizing dreams through the application of processes, it occurred to us that we could be more effective if we first identified the dream and then designed the processes to realize that dream.

So, we now invite leaders to describe their dreams, identifying their most extraordinary, never-before-achieved aspirations. We ask them to be fearless and imaginative, to be outrageous and extraordinarily creative.

They come up with some remarkable ideas—hospitals that eliminate all avoidable deaths, banks that increase market share by 10 percent in one year, corporations that become environmentally friendly, communities that grow into world-class centers of excellence and innovation, States that reinvent their education system and rethink the role of prison inmates, organizations that change the world. These are not

ideas that fit easily under a heading of "mission, vision, and values." We need a larger container to accommodate such magnificent ideas. We need a dream.

So we ask our clients to believe in the dream, to assume that the dream is realizable, and to imagine that when their energies are harnessed behind that dream, it will be achieved. An organization with 10,000 employees and a dream, that harnesses this total energy—the passion of every employee—behind that dream, stands a great chance of achieving it!

Plate Spinners

How do leaders help to create and realize a dream? Think about those plate-spinning circus performers who balance plates on the ends of sticks. Typically, after the spinners get seven or eight plates going, the first plate starts to wobble, and they have to race back to re-spin it. They repeat the process to keep all the plates from falling.

I think of a leadership team as plate spinners. The plates represent the inspiration of others, and the team's role is to keep the inspiration going. A plate drops when we do anything that sucks the passion from the dream. The top team's role is to never do anything—I repeat, to *never* do anything—that is uninspiring or demoralizing to the people who are united in their efforts to achieve the dream.

And the team directly responsible for leading those who are realizing the dream must be fully inspired, too—all of the time—inspired to live their lives in a way that inspires others. All of the time. No dropped plates.

The leader's purpose is to inspire everyone, every day, all the time, in every way, in every communication and action—so that every action, feeling, and relationship moves people closer to realizing the dream. The first act that demoralizes someone who's trying to realize a dream will break the spell, trash the passion, and waste the opportunity.

When we think about what's possible, even if never attained before, identify it as a dream that we hold dear, and then commit to aligning the entire team or organization behind everything necessary to achieve that dream—the dream becomes possible.

Martin Luther King, Jr., showed us how. So did Jack Kennedy. So can you. **LE**

Lance Secretan is founder of The Secretan Center, a consulting practice specializing in cultural and leadership transformation to achieve extraordinary performance. His new book is *One: The Art and Practice of Conscious Leadership*. E-mail: lance@secretan.com.

ACTION: Share a bold dream.

The Race for Talent

Innovate to gain talent-share.



by Brian C. Walker

ACHIEVING AND CAPITALIZING on innovation rests squarely on people. Technology doesn't innovate. Venture capital doesn't innovate. People do. To attract the best and brightest people, leaders need to pursue three cultural aspirations—performance, inclusiveness, and purpose.

At Herman Miller, we have a perspective on those three goals—a perspective that continues to evolve after 75 years. We became connected with innovation, and the design talent that sparked it, in 1930 with the help of Gilbert Rohde, an early proponent of modern American design.

Our connections to talented designers—Rohde, Charles Eames, George Nelson, Isamu Noguchi and others—drove our growth through the 1950s and 1960s. Such connections—to Doug Ball, Ayse Birsel, Jeff Weber, Studio 7.5 of Berlin, and Eric Chan—continue today. Talent, both outside and inside Herman Miller, is the basis for our innovations in products, HR, IT, operations—every part of the company.

Talented People Produce Innovation

Most executives assert that innovation is among their top three priorities. Innovation has become the Holy Grail. Most leaders want it, but don't know how to get it. In fact, two-thirds admit to making poor progress.

Innovation lies at the heart of our ability to grow. Our future—and that of every organization—is in talented and creative people.

Malcolm Gladwell, author of *The Tipping Point*, notes that innovation is the heart of the knowledge economy, and it is profoundly social. Larry Prusak, former head of IBM's knowledge group, believes that all work is social. People and their interactions produce innovations. Yet attracting talented people and creating the social work settings that make them stay and be productive is getting more competitive.

Two years ago, the Bureau of Labor Statistics predicted a labor shortfall in 2010 of 10 million. Last year, half of Manpower's clients could not fill the

vacant positions—and 40 percent of workers are seeking a new job. The competition for talent is accelerating.

In the U.S., the retirement or semi-retirement of the Baby Boomers, combined with the booming economies in Asia, are squeezing the supply of talented people. Talented foreign students no longer automatically stay in the U.S. to find jobs. In fact, 80 percent of the Chinese students now studying in the U.S. say they will return to China after graduating.

These data points tell me that we had better make our organizations welcoming and motivating places.

Formula for Keeping Talent

So how do we attract and keep talented people? Beyond good salaries, inter-



esting work, good work environments, choices, and flexible schedules, there is something more—what I call *cultural aspirations*. At Herman Miller, our formula looks like this: Performance + Inclusiveness + Purpose = Talented People. These three qualities create a culture that will attract talent and keep it here.

1. Commit to high performance. The best organizations are driven by a culture of performance. They have a clear picture of what high performance is, they measure it, and they pay and promote people based on it. In his book *Thinking for a Living*, Tom Davenport says that nothing is more crucial to high performers than strong, diverse, and knowledgeable networks of personal relationships. Winning organizations cultivate such networks.

Innovation and the expectation of high performance must extend to all parts of the company. The demand for high-performance leads to more high performance. It also requires high per-

formance from leaders.

2. Seek diversity and value inclusiveness. By the year 2050, there will be no ethnic majority in the U.S. At this moment, there is no ethnic majority in California public schools. Only 15 years from now, minorities will make up one-third of the American workforce.

For us to have the talent we need to compete effectively with the best global companies, we must create an inclusive community in West Michigan, where most of our employees live, but also at our sites worldwide. Our challenge is daunting, due to the largely homogenous area in which our business is headquartered; but most companies face similar issues to some degree or another.

Why is inclusiveness so important? Differences lead to innovation. The friction of different points of view produces new products, new ideas, new approaches. People want to work for and buy their goods from organizations that reflect themselves. And, the bigger the talent pool, the more likely you are to get the best people.

3. Pursue a larger sense of purpose. People are looking for more than just a paycheck: 96 percent of U.S. workers prefer flexible work hours; 86 percent of workers say that a balance between work and life is among their career objectives; 73 percent of the people say that they would put their careers on hold for their families. These statistics point to a huge shift in priorities.

Herman Miller founder D.J. De Pree once said, "A business is rightly judged by its product and service, but it must also face scrutiny and judgment as to its humanity." This sentence is inscribed on our Main Site building. Such inscriptions keep CEOs awake at night—and inspired to do the right things for the right reasons.

Building a sense of purpose into our lives may be the most important factor in our efforts to attract creative and educated talent. A sense of purpose might take many forms—protecting the environment, reducing poverty or illiteracy, or improving education. We encourage people to get involved in such projects. The best people want to look and work outside themselves—and outside their organizations.

To lead with innovation, you need the best people. Getting them isn't easy. But the payoff can be wonderful—even if the art of leading them isn't easy, either. **LE**

Brian C. Walker is CEO of Herman Miller. Visit www.hermanmiller.com.

ACTION: Attract and keep top talent.

Certification

It's a retention strategy.



by Judith A. Hale

LEADERS ARE EXPERIMENTING with new ways to develop and retain capable people. They know that being competitive depends on their people doing their jobs well, and yet they are faced with the challenges of replacing an aging workforce on the brink of retirement with limited qualified candidates, keeping sales and service personnel current on increasingly sophisticated products and changing regulations, and offsetting shrinking margins due to lower-cost competitors.

Two experimental solutions are outsourcing and certification. Leaders outsource non-core functions to lower costs by reducing headcount, focusing on their strengths, and avoiding long-term financial commitments—such as retirement benefits and healthcare costs; however, to work effectively, outsourcing requires higher skills and vendor and program management. It's not a good solution for jobs wherein employees create and make use of the company's product and market intelligence. For such hard-to-replace jobs, companies are looking to certification.

Who Is Certifying and Why?

Certification is being implemented by organizations whose people: 1) use and interpret complex data, such as electronic, scientific, financial, and market data; or 2) sell, install, calibrate, and service suites of products, or products that have to interface or integrate with multi-generational-technologies.

Companies that grow through mergers and acquisitions are also using certification to cross-train the old and the newly acquired workers quickly. The assessment is used to accurately identify skill deficiencies so people receive only the training they require. Other companies implementing certification are manufacturers that depend on dealerships and distributors to sell and support their products. These companies must help their distribution channels develop and assess workers' abilities.

Analyzing complex data, integrating legacy systems with new products,

relying on after-market partners, and growing through mergers are not mutually exclusive as companies that have to interpret complex data also grow through acquisitions and rely on after-market partners. Whatever the driver, the goals are to protect brand image and to retain or increase profit margins.

Good certifications involve assessments that accurately identify skill and knowledge deficiencies to shorten the time it takes to develop people's proficiency, minimize the cost of training by concentrating only on areas of need, and help distinguish a company from its competition. Even companies that rely on professional and industry certifications, such as accounting and engineering, must implement their own programs to assure the workforce can use their systems and processes and support their product mix.

Certifications require a more disciplined management system to be effective. For example, performance requires more than skills and knowledge. It requires accurate and timely information, well-designed processes, efficient systems, sufficient resources, and appropriate incentives. Without these elements, people's ability and incentive to do a job well is compromised. The appreciation for all that is required for a worker to be effective is one reason companies are rejecting the traditional model of certification and implementing a performance model.

The traditional model of certification involves taking training and passing a test. However, experience, training, and testing do not guarantee performance on-the-job. What companies need is a program that addresses barriers to performance as well as measure how well people can do a task in the work setting.

Performance-based Assessment

There are two types of performance-based assessments. The first is a simulation that uses scenarios or examples of real data or product specifications. People are asked to analyze the information and select the best response

among a series of plausible choices. This assessment more safely tests problem-solving skills before the worker interacts with the actual customer or steps foot on the production floor.

The second type puts the responsibility on the supervisor to observe employees in customer or team interactions and judge employees' job outputs whether it is a report, a physical product, or an analysis of data. This requires well-defined performance measures, standardized checklists, and implementation protocols that assure fairness and validity.

At the same time organizations are building certifications, workers, too, are earning credentials from vendors and professional associations. In the computer



industry, manufacturers and vendors offer certifications that customers require as part of the hiring criteria. Professional societies and trade associations are also offering certifications. Many are based on tests of a common body of required knowledge.

However, some are adopting performance tests. One example is a performance-

and competency-based credential—Certified Performance Technologist (CPT)—offered by the International Society for Performance Improvement (ISPI) for the learning and performance professional. This certification relies on attestations by the practitioner's employer that the person's work was of value (performance) and an assessment by trained reviewers of the practitioners' work description (competency). The ISPI credential was developed in response to customers wanting to better identify capable practitioners, and the standards were developed by customers, not by practitioners and academics.

If your company is considering developing a certification, ask what the company expects to be different as a result, what business problem it is trying to solve, and how will success be determined? Use this information to design the credential and to measure its effectiveness. If the certification uses an assessment instrument or process, consider making that assessment as similar to the work and work setting as possible. Identify the people who rely on the work being executed well and incorporate their expectations in the criteria. **LE**

Judith Hale is director of certification for the International Society for Performance Improvement. She's the author of Performance-Based Certification. Email judyh@ispi.org.

ACTION: Develop a certification.

Sound Judgment

The essence of leadership.



by Noel Tichy and Warren Bennis

THE LEADER'S MOST IMPORTANT ROLE is making good judgment calls in three domains: key people, strategy, and crisis. Great leaders have a high percentage of good judgment calls; they are only *good* if the execution is successful. The second most important role you play is to develop other leaders who can make good judgment calls.

We all make thousands of judgment calls, some trivial and some monumental (whom to marry, what career to pursue). The measure of your life success is the sum of all of these judgment calls—the good ones and bad ones and the cumulative consequence for the quality of life. The importance of making good judgment calls is magnified many times when you take on a leadership role because of the impact on the lives of others.

In your role as a leader, how can you make better judgment calls—and help other leaders to do the same?

Experience is very important in developing judgment. People who exercise good judgment draw on their own experiences for guidance, and good leaders expose others to a variety of experiences for the specific purpose of helping them develop their own judgment. But there is a lot more to it than flying by the seat of your pants.

We often hear, and sometimes even think to ourselves, that judgment is largely about accessing intuition or having a gut feeling. Or you “blink” and have a wondrous epiphany.

These statements of non-rational “thinking” certainly do *feel* true, and it might be that in a sense they are true. There is the moment, as GE CEO, Jeff Immelt, puts it, when “Boom, I decide.” But to the extent that it’s true, it is a short-hand description for a complex web of other thoughts and activity.

Good judgment is not one terrific “aha” moment after another. In the real-world, good judgment, at least on

the big issues that make a difference, is usually an incremental process. Quantum theory, the polio vaccine, Cubism, the Double Helix, the iPod—all these landmark breakthroughs in business, science, engineering, and the arts came about only after years of trying and “trialing,” of mistakes and missteps, of correcting, refining, and yes, trying again. Intuition helps, so does blinking, but it is rarely sufficient. As the Talmud says, “Expect miracles, but don’t count on them.”

So, having come face to face with our belief that good judgment is the essential genome of good leadership,



we have tackled it head on and come up with a framework for understanding how good leaders go about making good judgment calls.

We don’t pretend to have all the answers—or asked *all* of the possible questions—but we have watched hundreds of leaders making thousands of judgment calls. We have seen good calls and bad ones. We have seen leaders make so-so initial calls and then manage and re-tune them mid-air to produce brilliant results. And we have seen leaders make spot-on, inspired decisions and then end up in the ditch because they didn’t follow through on execution, or they looked away and missed a critical context change. We have learned, a lot. And by putting our brains—and experiences together—we have come up with our framework.

The Framework

Despite the implications of the word *call*, the judgment calls that leaders make can’t be viewed as single, point-in-time events. Like umpires and referees, leaders do, at some moment, make a call. They make a determination about how things

should proceed. But unlike umpires and referees, they cannot—without risking total failure—quickly forget them and move ahead to the next play. Rather, for a leader, the moment of making of the call comes in the middle of a process.

That process begins with the leader recognizing the need for a judgment and continues through successful execution. Leaders are said to have “good judgment” when they repeatedly make judgment calls that turn out well. And these calls often turn out well because they have mastered a complex process that unfolds in several dimensions.

- **Time:** We have identified three phases to the process: *Pre*—what happens before the leader makes the decision. *The call*—what the leader does as he or she makes the decision that helps it turn out to be the right one. *Execution*—what the leader must oversee to ensure the call produces the desired results.

- **Domain:** The elements of the process, the attention that must be paid to each of them, and the time over which the judgment unfolds varies with its subject matter. We have identified three critical domains in which most of the most important calls are required: 1) judgments about *people*; 2) judgments about *strategy*, and 3) judgments in time of *crisis*.

- **Constituencies:** A leader’s relationships provide the information and the means for executing the call. A leader must interact with these different constituencies, consider their various interests and manage those relationships to make successful calls. And to improve judgment-making in the firm, the leader must use these interactions to help others learn to make successful calls.

We have identified four types of knowledge needed to do this: *self-knowledge*—personal values and goals; *social network knowledge*—regarding those who surround you daily; *organizational knowledge*—people at all levels; and *contextual knowledge*—the myriad other stakeholders (customers, suppliers, government, stockholders, competitors, and interest groups).

We offer this framework to help you improve your judgment-making faculties, to do a better job of developing good judgment in others, and to encourage a more vigorous conversation about judgment. We need more leaders with better judgment. LE

Noel Tichy and Warren Bennis are coauthors of the forthcoming book: *Judgment: The Essence of Leadership*, from which this article is adapted with permission. Visit www.noeltichy.com. Warren Bennis is a distinguished professor of business administration at USC and an advisor to Harvard Business School and others. Visit wbennis@earthlink.net.

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Lean Thinking

See and manage your firm as a system.



by Rob Lebow

LEAN THINKING CAN BE applied by anyone anywhere, but its full power is only realized when it is applied to all elements of the enterprise and when work is viewed as a whole system. All enterprises should be seen and managed as a system, and this change in thinking can't be made simply by designing tools.

Lean tools are all natural expressions of how to solve or fix problems. But, tools often create unexpected or unintended results. Most leaders who use *lean thinking* hope for a transformation from their manufacturing or services culture to a lean organization where everything goes on schedule. Sadly, applying the tools doesn't often transform or change time-honored systems at the core, but applying the right tools get managers closer to the heart of the solution—a new way of thinking about work at the design level.

The Overuse of Tools

Tools are often overused because they can be applied in isolation without tackling the difficult tasks of changing the management approach or philosophy. Upsetting management—the *very hand that feeds them*—is the last thing that “tool merchants” want to do. Implementing tools also demonstrates activity and forthright leadership, and often wards off criticism of doing nothing to fix problems.

Sadly, tools won't change a system. Tools help only when the context of their use is in concert with first taking a different view of the work. Tools can and should be used to manifest problems people can only solve by viewing the work as the system—not ignoring tools, but not over-relying on them. We shouldn't teach tools as the final answer to solving or fixing problems. It is the *different view*—the way you conceptualize the problems—that counts. The key to transformation is developing a method for helping everyone take a different view of their work.

This is how values-based transformation works. It promotes a cultural change that becomes open to new

ideas; respectful of people, and friendly to a different view of work as a system—not a series of isolated activities with imposed job descriptions, hierarchy, and quarter-to-quarter thinking. This is replaced by long-range visioning; true customer service—placing the customer at the center of each transaction; sharing values that build trust, transparency, and ethical behavior; and responding to work-related problems as an *act of variation* with no one to blame or chastise.

During this transformation from isolated problem-solving to viewing work



as a system, *the traditional hierarchy is at risk*. Ultimately, what is at risk is the *very concept of control*. At the heart of this transformation is the notion of who should own the work; how we value work and view it; and what the design of the work should look like.

Who should decide these issues? If management decides, people will simply go through ghost-like exercises and fail to enjoy any lasting or meaningful transformation. And, employees will be frustrated; stakeholders and directors disappointed, and valuable time and resources wasted.

It is incredibly powerful to manage services end-to-end, removing functional hierarchical designs, replacing them with system designs that engage people, root-out corruption and cronyism, and enable people to measure their own performance, respond to variation in production, and ask “off-team” members who choose neither to be responsible nor accountable for their actions, choices, or behaviors.

Frontline ownership is possible in every transaction. This is what creates

ownership, passion, creativity, productivity, morale, and commitment—not value-stream management.

Three Steps

Changing the system requires changing roles and measures in three steps:

Step 1 is when teams of staff members, with help from internal experts, focus on their processes, and see them as part of a larger system. The results will be positive: customers will be served, and commitment, creativity and enthusiasm will be high; but if these staff members and experts focus on their numbers—which are often arbitrary to begin with (*yet their pay, promotional opportunities and career are judged by them*), the process likely won't improve; and that's when the cheating, falsifications, political rivalries, manipulations and blame-games begin, with customers and productivity being the losers!

Step 2 is to *remove performance measures* that undermine performance, and replace them with measures that help you improve the work within a process. Leaders and staff members alike have to *un-learn old thinking about measurement* and work with measures that are more valid and useful in understanding how their *work works!*

Measures that focus on variation and not on an obsession with trying to *standardize everything* are the key to this new way of thinking about work, performance, and productivity.

The mentality that believes that “tools can solve our problems” is replaced with “we'll use tools to understand our work and improve our approach to variation and stop blaming workers for this variation.” Variation isn't removed by standardization practices using policies, procedures and quota systems; it's addressed by studying the predictability of variation and getting everyone involved in improving our systems by understanding the systemic causes.

Step 3 entails a new way to look at budgeting. If you forget about the “money,” any transformation will be flawed! Budgets are a reality. Re-thinking the way we conduct budgeting from the developmental, methodological and final completion cycles is a key in sustaining a transformation. If the budget remains a sacred cow, the *Management Factory* will remain intact, and nothing will change except for one thing—waste in the system will continue to grow. LE

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ACTION: Improve your systems.

Commitment

It drives high performance.



by Michael Feiner

ALL SUCCESSFUL LEADERS I've known became successful

because of commitment to their own success. Corporate life is demanding, and it takes an intense achievement orientation. Executives must be passionate about being outstanding performers, meeting or beating their targets, and driving performance.

Perhaps commitment to one's success is a just another way to describe ambition. But I use the word *commitment* for a reason. This story explains why.

I had been vice president and chief people officer for Pepsi's \$3 billion U.S. business for less than a year. There was a possibility of a work stoppage in our most profitable market, since we desired to convert our employees from a Teamsters Union pension plan to a company plan that would be less expensive for Pepsi to fund. We believed our employees were getting a raw deal, since too much of Pepsi's monthly contribution to the Teamster plan was covering excessive administrative costs, not employee benefits. The trick was convincing our employees that our company plan would be better for them. But first my boss and I had to convince PepsiCo's COO that our intentions were worth the risk of a long strike in a city that was a bastion of Teamster support.

Because I was no expert on pension plan funding, I was bringing my benefits guru to the meeting. When he informed me the day before the meeting that he was unable to accompany me, I was shocked. He had a personal commitment—he needed to take his young kids trick-or-treating!

I was angry at my pension expert for not telling me sooner. But my immediate concern was to figure out what to do. Should I tell him, "I'm sorry, but I'm not willing to give you a pass on the meeting?" He was a talented manager, and I didn't want to alienate him—and his family! Yet the next day's meeting was a big deal—to me and my career and to the business, given the money involved. And what should I

tell my boss, who knew I'm no pension whiz—should I grant the request?

Leaders have to decide when to cut employees slack and when the organization must come first. They are faced with special requests from employees involving sick children, spouses, or parents; or school recitals, doctor's appointments, college visits, soccer games, athletic events, extra vacation time, or long weekends. Some of these

seem weighty and important; others can seem trivial.



Conventional wisdom would suggest I simply tell him that trick-or-treating, while important to him, is insignificant given the importance this meeting. I wasn't afraid to tell him that he had to attend. At Pepsi I was considered a demanding boss with high performance standards. But that's not what I decided to do. Instead, I decided to give him a pass because I had come to understand the Law of Personal Commitment. It states that *if a leader wants a subordinate to be committed to the success of the leader and the leader's organization, then the leader must be committed to the subordinate*—to his or her growth and development, and to what's important to him or her both inside and outside the office.

I told him I thought he was carrying this trick-or-treat thing to extremes. But I recognized this time with his kids was important to him. So I asked him to bring me up to speed and teach me everything he could about this pension stuff. And I covered for my manager, telling my boss that he couldn't make the meeting because he had an impor-

tant personal matter. So my boss and I went to the meeting, and I made the presentation. The COO asked three questions that I knew the answers to, we were done in 15 minutes, and he gave us approval to take the strike.

My pension expert, meanwhile, was a little shocked at my decision. But, because I put my body on the tracks for him, he saw that I cared about him and what was important to him. Of course, he knew how ambitious I was and how concerned I was about my performance. But he saw that he wasn't just another factor of production in my career dreams. He realized I was prepared to make a sacrifice for him.

He worked with me for another 11 years, and was incredibly loyal and committed to me, to my success, and to our team performance.

The Law of Personal Commitment means that you must be committed to your subordinates' careers as well as to your own and that to get loyalty, you must give loyalty. This commitment occurs in small ways—like getting back to a person when you promised, making sure performance appraisals are done on time, processing the salary increase when it's due, being available to answer questions—and in big ways, like teaching and coaching regularly.

Leaders, then, must be committed to a subordinate's growth, development, and success as much as they are committed to their own fame and fortune. I once had a boss who would go through his mail during our meetings. Think about the signal this sent to me. He had no interest in me as a person, only in my productivity, and whether or not I was meeting his objectives. If a leader cares about his or her people, commits daily to their growth, and conveys that commitment, they will give 120 percent. That's what my pension expert did for me, after I took a risk for him.

Great leaders are committed not only to their own success but also to the success of their people. There's no faking this commitment. People know if their boss is genuinely committed. And there's also no outside protocol that a leader can follow to acquire this commitment. However, when a leader establishes some share of mind for the success and concerns and needs of his or her people, you'll likely find a high-performing organization. **LE**

Michael Feiner is a professor of management and Sanford C. Bernstein & Co. Ethics Fellow at Columbia Graduate School of Business. He is the author of The Feiner Points of Leadership (Warner Books). Visit www.feinerpoints.com.

ACTION: Show your commitment.

Five Lessons

Reflect on the past year.



by **Richard Lepsinger**

LEADERS OF EVERY Stripe are reflecting on the past year. What went right? What went wrong? Did we make progress toward our goals? Did our business grow? Did profits increase? Did the quality of our products and services improve? Did our leaders truly lead? Were our people motivated and engaged? If the annual soul-searching has you feeling overwhelmed, learn from others.

Many major companies experienced dramatic failures and successes. Their mistakes can be instructive, and their victories inspiring.

Innovation and Change

The Good: Procter & Gamble. P&G made 2006 a year to remember by doing well in all areas of execution. The company had a clear, unifying vision and strategy, coordinated its efforts globally, focused on customers, and shared ideas to reach new customers and keep current ones. CEO Alan G. Lafley emphasized that the customer is king, and employees focused on developing products that they knew P&G's customers would like.

The Bad: Dell. Companies can get stuck in a rut. After developing "the Dell Way," Dell became reluctant to change. The company once attracted customers to its website with low-cost offers that required the buyer to make additions in order to have the best computer, which meant the price would be more than the original low-cost offer. Now, consumers don't have to go to Dell to get a "custom-made" computer. When Dell realized they were losing business to competitors, they fell back on an old practice: they cut costs to maintain market share. One place that suffered was customer service, once one of their strengths.

The Lesson: To run a successful business, you need to create and implement innovative strategies and adjust to changes in the market. You have to be flexible. Embracing the spirit of innovation and change can help you reach new levels of success, while being rigid and unwilling to change can

cause serious, even irreparable, harm.

Employee Engagement

The Good: Google. Their leaders find ways to ensure that everyone has a voice. One way they keep their ears open to grassroots ideas is a policy that allows engineers to spend at least one day a week working on their own pet projects. The company also uses smaller teams to develop new concepts—sometimes assigning only three or four people to a team. In contrast, Microsoft tends to have many large teams working on the same project. The lack of



communication and coordination among teams leads to problems. Google avoids such problems by using small teams whose members have more ownership and accountability and can easily communicate and execute their ideas.

The Bad: National Basketball Association (NBA). The NBA introduced a new basketball but forgot to involve the players in the decision! Asking the players would have increased the quality of the ball and the acceptance of the decision. As a result, the players refused to use the new ball, and the NBA had to scrap the new ball and go back to old one.

The Lesson: Involve people whose support you need in decisions that affect them. Employees shouldn't feel they exist only to help the company make profits. They should be involved in all critical decisions that affect them and freely share their thoughts and concerns. This gives them a sense of ownership. Involvement and engagement should be built into a culture. Great ideas must not be merely welcomed; they must be solicited.

Execution

The Good: Hewlett-Packard. CEO Mark Hurd said that whether or not acquiring Compaq was a good idea is now irrelevant: what's done is done, and his job now is to find a way to make it work. He reorganized the company into three divisions, with each division having its own sales force, making the heads of the divisions responsible for sales. He also reorganized the IT function. Instead of having 85 data centers, he centralized them into three. So, he decentralized the sales force and centralized the IT function—the opposite of the way the company was organized—to better align structure with strategy. Operating profit increased by 31 percent during 2006.

The Good: Motorola. Another example of great execution, Motorola coordinated decisions and actions across work units. While developing new mobile phones, the company assembled teams that included members of each major department—design, engineering, marketing, and finance. Thus, they avoided false starts, delays, and cost overruns because all the key players were involved from day one. These teams enable Motorola to see what consumers want from various perspectives.

The Bad: Ford Motor Company. In 2006 Ford struggled to execute, allowing departments to clash with one another. Ford did a terrible job executing on its strategies. For example, the company decided to update the Ford Focus. The North American operation and the European operation each developed a new version. The two groups couldn't agree, so they each did what they wanted to do. As a result, Ford couldn't share parts or take advantage of economies of scale.

The Lesson: Executing well is everything. It doesn't matter how great your strategy or how brilliant your vision if you can't bring it to fruition. Execution is the real bottom line—and it's what you need to focus on as you seek to improve performance. Companies that execute well: 1) coordinate actions and decisions across work units and levels, 2) have structure and systems that support the strategy, 3) involve employees in decision-making, and 4) manage change effectively. Post these four factors on your wall, and let them drive every decision. One year from now, you'll be glad you did. **LE**

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ACTION: Learn lessons from others.

Creating Leader 2.0

What is the future of leadership?



by André Martin

THIS IS THE BEGINNING." "The world is flat." "We are at a tipping point." "We must reset our rule sets." "The keys to the kingdom are changing hands." "All we have is the next 24 hours." No matter whose words we use—Mau, Friedman, Gladwell, Barnett, Pink, or Enriquez—it is clear that our world is undergoing a shift. As a new age of uncertainty and rapid change emerges, new leadership skills will be needed to stay competitive.

The Center for Creative Leadership surveyed 600 managers worldwide to explore the current state and future hopes of leaders. These leaders believe the definition of effective leadership has changed. So, how will leadership be different in the future? And, what is driving the shift?

- **Future leadership approaches will focus on collaboration over heroics.** Collaborative skills such as building and mending relationships, participative management, and change management are increasingly important.

- **Approaches to leadership will differ from region to region** as the nature of the challenges facing leaders changes. The challenges today are more complex, have greater strategic impact, go beyond individual leadership capability, require working across boundaries, and render tried-and-true solutions ineffective.

- **Changes in the business context also drive the need for collaboration.** These trends include: rapidly shifting competition bases, globalization, competing stakeholder demands, a drive for innovation, unstable mergers and acquisitions, and a need for reinvention.

What can you do to prepare for a more complex and collaborative future? Here are some ideas:

- **Understand how to lead by uncovering the "ground truth."** How can you be agile enough to lead in any context? Organizations in Europe and Asia-Pacific expect to have fewer boundaries and a greater reliance on leadership approaches focusing on emergent strategy and interdependent decision-making. Thus, leaders need to be aware of

the difference across departments, organizations, and regions.

Today's leaders need to find the ground truth—the idea that we must reshape tried-and-true solutions and products to fit a new time, place, and customer. As we move beyond our borders, we must seek to understand the new markets and environments.

Edgar Bronfman, CEO of Warner Music, puts this idea into practice by holding "employee roundtables" where 12 to 20 junior employees are given the time and space to talk, create, and provide a perspective that

can be lost to leaders.

Now people gripe less than they offer solutions, and Bronfman gets the context he and other leaders need to create an environment of high performance.

- **Become an architect of innovation and collaboration.** How can you design systems and structures to cultivate new leadership

approaches? An optimal reward system would include a balance of individual performance and collaboration, innovation, and long-term thinking.

Google is a great example of this approach. Marissa Mayer, the Director of Consumer Web Products, is building a culture of innovation and collaboration by providing "office hours" where any employee can pitch new (and often big) ideas.

- **Create an "idea listserve"** where anyone can suggest or comment on speculative ideas.

- **Remain fearless and launch products early and often.**

- **Stay in touch with the ranks of employees** no matter how large the number swells.

- **Study the collaborative tools of your own "positive disobedient".**

Which of your leaders breaks the rules, remains effective in ever-changing environments, and gets results? There are leaders who have been honing the skills of collaboration, innovation, and relationship-building for decades. These leaders live beyond the norms but still manage to succeed.

Consider this example. At age 29, Richard Rosenblatt sold IMall to ExciteAtHome for \$565 million and then was recruited by Intermix Media to turnaround the company which in just two years resulted in a sell of MySpace for over \$580 million. Several large companies line up for his products, yet few ask, "How does he do it?"

One might argue that this is the curse of the positively disobedient—we forgive (ignore) the process to reap the benefits. However, what would happen if someone offered to simply shadow Richard for six months for a small fee? Would this bring a higher ROI in the long term than the price of a single product he has launched?

Organizations should begin taking a closer look at these (positive disobedient) leaders—exploring their successes in a systematic way. Now is the time to pull

these individuals from the fringe and make them (and their approaches) exemplars.

- **Upend the world of interruption by developing leaders in context.**

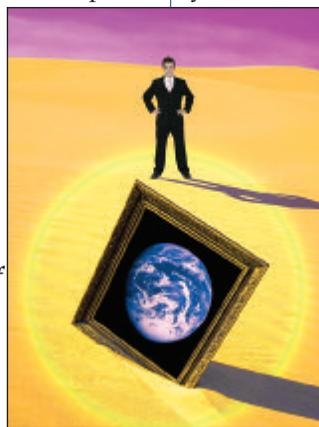
How do we find time to develop leaders given the complexity and pace of work? We live in a state of continuous partial attention. It is nearly impossible to find the time to complete our

day-to-day tasks, let alone the space to develop ourselves in hopes of keeping a competitive edge.

To compete in the future, we will need to meld actual work with development. One strategy is to create leadership development experiences that utilize action learning as the central context; where personal insights can be gleaned in the context of real work, thereby avoiding major productivity loss.

Organizations like the Army are reaping enormous returns from an **action-learning** approach. Army commanders are engaged in an ongoing conversation about how to build and lead combat teams. They have the ability to share in real time and learn from real challenges and experience.

The job of the leader is to create space for other people to generate new ideas; to encourage meaningful conversation; and to assist people in becoming more effective, agile, and prepared for complex challenges. **LE**



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ACTION: Develop your future leaders.

Four Priorities

Build bonds with stakeholders.



by Christopher Rice

LEADERSHIP ISN'T GETTING any easier. The market's obsession for quarterly earnings stymies even the best strategists. Customers and high-performing employees have more choices. Extreme transparency has replaced closed-door inner workings. No wonder CEOs feel like they have a big bull's-eye on their backs.

Leadership requires a balance between business competence and personal connection. It's no longer enough for leaders to be capable. They must also build authentic bonds with employees, customers, and other stakeholders—a daunting challenge. To succeed, leaders need to focus on four priorities.

1. Executive, develop thyself.

Expectations of leadership have risen beyond the capabilities of most senior executives. The best leaders know they need to be compelling and inspirational, but they are often challenged by how to do it. What does it take?

- **Cast an objective eye.** Know how you measure up to today's higher standards and what impact your actions have. It's easy to dismiss feedback as grumbling, since the most annoying employees are the first to point out your flaws. It is critical, however, that you listen, not argue.

- **Take time to reflect on what drives you personally.** Personal values fuel confidence and effective communications. To be inspirational, you need to be inspired yourself.

2. Correct cultural corruption.

Compliance with the new laws and regulatory requirements might keep you out of jail and your firm out of the headlines, but it won't build a sustainable, high-performing organization. Cultural corruption isn't about breaking the law. It's about bad business practices that undermine commitment. It's about the chasm between leaders' talk and actions. Prevent your high performers from bolting toward the door:

- **Watch for the little things that don't seem right.** Audits and culture scans can identify practices that may support

short-term financial gain at the expense of productivity and engagement. They also measure pride, a prerequisite to retention and high performance. Leaders need to scrutinize the company they keep and do business with entities aligned with their values.

- **Pay attention to behavior not rules.** A culture that operates with ethical intent at every level is created by leaders who model desired behaviors, not by employees who follow policy. Paperwork that satisfies the scrutiny of regulators won't inspire the contribution you need from every employee. Encourage people to do the right thing, even when no one is looking.



- **Earn trust every day.** In a well-managed organization, only half the workforce will say they trust senior leaders, yet most executives rate themselves as trustworthy. This intent/effect gap results from employees drawing conclusions with minimum information—what is said in a meeting or a decision communicated through the ranks—not the other 90 percent of what leaders do each day. So, leaders need to explain the decision-making process and motivation for their actions.

3. Drive productivity and innovation through engagement.

Leaders need to own employee engagement because engaged employees are more productive, treat customers better, innovate, and stay. Don't confuse employee engagement with satisfaction and assume that a few HR initiatives can give poor employee survey scores a boost. Engagement goes beyond satisfaction to reflect contribution. Engaged employees are committed and aligned to apply their unique skills to contribute to priorities.

To boost engagement leaders should:

- **Get rid of disengaged subversives** (usually 8 percent of the workforce). These employees may not have started out so alienated; bad practices or poor leadership may have pushed them over the edge. They undermine productivity by dragging everyone down around them. They're a threat to the bottom line.

- **Provide meaning.** It's up to leaders to help their people find meaning at work. That meaning can take the form of personal connection with ambitious goals or achievement of more personal career aspirations. Leaders need to articulate goals, paint a compelling vision of the future, and help employees to connect the dots.

- **Make sure you are engaged.** Disengaged leaders lack the clarity of purpose or energy to engage others. Executives must be clear on the strategy and their top three priorities before they can align everyone else. And if they can't articulate why they show up at work, they need to stop "doing" and think about what matters most to them.

4. Make talent management a business priority.

Leaders need to have the right people in the right jobs focused on the right priorities—and ensure that employees have the information and support they need to align their interests and career aspirations with the organization's goals. That dual focus can reduce unwanted turnover and create a sustainable competitive advantage. To achieve it:

- **Don't "manage" your top talent.** These people have marketable skills, and so if they have their fate decided by a succession planning committee or a well-intentioned manager, they may head for the door. Top talent demand to be involved. They have their own ideas for moving forward. The best leaders offer desirable stretch assignments and special projects and encourage innovation and risk-taking. Align individuals' initiative with organizational priorities, and then get out of the way.

- **Develop the pack.** Many leaders provide elaborate high-potential programs and only mediocre development opportunities for the rest. That's a shaky foundation. Leaders need to tirelessly align and coach team members. Consistent high-performing businesses hold leaders accountable for developing team members. Leaders who actively coach are well-positioned to quickly redeploy talent to meet shifting business requirements. LE

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ACTION: Excel in these priorities.

Ride the Turbulence

Face the winds of change.



by John Bostick

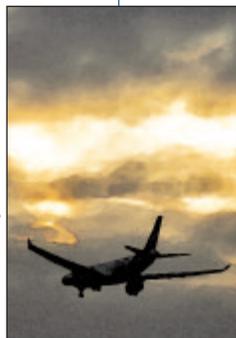
AS A CEO, I AM often the face and the spokesperson of my company. So, I travel for various reasons: sales calls, media interviews, customer visits, negotiations with partners—you name it, I've had a meeting about it. In fact, this flow of needs, objectives, and requirements is one of the things I enjoy most about my job.

For the most part, I enjoy being out there, watching business people do their stuff. I even enjoy a patch of turbulence now and then. Why? Because turbulence—and the response it draws from flyers—tells me a lot about business people and reminds me of a few things about myself.

During a recent flight, I observed how people on the plane react differently when turbulence hits. Some people stop what they are doing, tighten their seatbelts, fold their arms, and try to wait out the chop. Others keep trying to write notes, work on their laptops, or read magazine articles. And a few, like me, keep switching activities based on what works, regardless of the bumps.

I see parallels between the response to turbulence on a plane and the response by business leaders to the accelerating pace of change. Many operations managers react to the dynamic environment like the first and second groups of air travelers. They wait for the disruption to pass, or try to forge ahead. But they have no way of knowing whether the turbulence will stop, get better, or become more predictable. The environment is not in their control. Only their response to it is in their control. So, riding the flow of the turbulence is the only way to find a productive activity.

In today's changing atmosphere, business is a bumpy ride. And executives should take technological disruptions as opportunities to transform business practices and processes rather than shut down operations or continue counter-productive activities.



Transition points are opportunities for business transformation. Here are three ways to respond to transition points:

- **New management initiatives:** These initiatives must be designed to help drive growth, profitability, and shareholder value. Some companies introduce customer or quality initiatives. Others seek ways to reengineer their processes or reduce operating costs. Some introduce initiatives to "digitize" or "globalize" their businesses. All such efforts depend on successful change management if they are to achieve their objectives. Leaders of such initiatives must know how to ride turbulence.

- **Mergers and acquisitions:** In the wake of deregulation, the M&A movement has driven vast change, particularly through mega-mergers. Firms consolidate in order to address competitive challenges and commoditizing markets, as well as capitalize on anticipated synergies. Yet, two-thirds of all mergers fail to achieve their objectives. Consolidating organizations, cultures, processes, practices and systems is not easy. It takes great turbulence riders.

- **Partnerships and out-sourcing:** These approaches enable companies to use the capabilities of external parties as leverage, rather than struggle to buy or build them. By creating alliances with specialists, enterprises can acquire the capabilities they need to compete effectively without bearing all the

risks associated with building them internally. Outsourcing enables them to concentrate on the core capabilities that differentiate them while ensuring that non-core, yet critical and supporting, systems are effectively managed. Such moves enable leaders to anticipate and react more rapidly to market change—and they get the capabilities and benefits now. Such "strategic multi-sourcing" is another way to thrive on turbulence.

While these three approaches to confronting change involve risk, there is more risk associated with failing to act. So recognize transition points and take steps to address the changes they signify. Markets are prone to "creative destruction." The acceleration of change only enhances vulnerability, while empowering and enabling challengers to compete. Given these circumstances, leaders must learn to manage ongoing change. LE

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ACTION: Respond to transition points.

Awakened Leaders

Lead with integrity.



by Joan Marques

AWAKENED LEADERS lead themselves and their followers with more than just technical and academic skills. They maintain high alertness toward themselves, the people they guide, the organization they lead, and the environment in which they operate. Awakened leaders share five traits.

1. **They are driven by more than objectives.** Although they know that they have obtained their position to lead the organization toward growth and profits, they know well who drives the organization: the people. Thus, awakened leaders ensure that everyone involved—workers at all levels, shareholders, suppliers, customers, neighbors, and all others at stake—are treated well. They ensure that the objectives are aligned to the well-being of the people involved. And they ensure that they are kept abreast of trends in the environment. Seeing life as a gift, awakened leaders refrain from setting objectives that can harm the quality of life. And if certain processes are potential hazards to the health of some people, they search for alternatives so that the quality of life of even those whom they do not know, or have not encountered yet, is secured.

2. **They are value-based.** Awakened leaders base their decisions largely on values—the set of personal rules that they develop as they grow up. These come from home, school, religion, books, and other impressions. Values differ from person to person, culture to culture. Two awakened leaders from entirely diverging cultures can make very different decisions or very similar decisions. Awakened leaders know that there is no single way of leading, and that different decisions can all lead to useful outcomes. They know that it is not necessarily the nature of the decision, but more the actions undertaken after the decision has been made, that make it a successful one or not.

3. **They have integrity.** Integrity goes with trustworthiness and honesty. Knowing the importance of their followers believing in them, awakened

leaders always come up with the truth—even when it is not as beautiful as they would want it to be. They realize that if people are told what's going on, they will be more understanding and more willing to do whatever it takes to get things straight. When asked what qualities they would like in their leaders, people always mention integrity at the top of the list. As adults we all know that it's not always pleasant to hear the truth. But we would rather deal with the truth now than with a beautiful lie that only brings more headache, pain, and adjustments later. Awakened leaders opt for integrity because they want to maintain their inner peace. And that is only possible if the truth is communicated at all times.

Their integrity is reflected in their communication with stakeholders, and in the way they guide the organization. Involvement in questionable practices is taboo, even if the future seems to depend on it. They believe that with the right intentions toward the people, the business, and the environment, a better option will surface.

4. They have genuine compassion and respect for those they lead. These leaders are down-to-earth people who respect every member—no position is perceived superior or inferior to another. They see the facts of life in their right perspective: everything is of equal importance to great business performance—the source of their livelihood. So they treat each worker with respect. They mingle with their people regularly to establish connection and create goodwill and support. They also mingle because they realize that teachers appear at the most unexpected moments and places. They are ready to learn from every person.

5. They touch the spirit of the people. They provide a sense of meaning to people. They update meetings, company gatherings, family days, and encourage their people through email, flyers, or departmental sessions. They know that the people have family members and a life—hobbies and skills—and so they encourage people to share those skills with others. They might consider a talent night, or encourage co-workers to create a pleasant workplace, with pictures and drawings from the kids. They hold meetings in which people get to ask questions.

Awakened leaders recognize that workers are spiritual beings with various qualities, and they encourage people to cultivate those qualities. LE

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ACTION: Awaken your capacity to lead.

The Carrot Principle

Recognition that works.



by Adrian Gostick

EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION, long considered a benefit that costs money, can actually make money for organizations that do it right. It's like discovering gold in your backyard

At first blush, the idea is counter-intuitive. As leaders, we tend to view recognition programs as a cost. But recognition is evolving. Applying recognition techniques within a context of goal-setting, open communication, trust, and accountability accelerates the impact of these critical management skills.

That's the *Carrot Principle* at work; and here's what it can do for you as a leader:

- **Increase profitability and customer service levels.** Return on equity and return on assets are three times higher in organizations with an effective way to recognize employee excellence. The teams and offices rated most highly by employees in response to, "My manager does a good job of recognizing employee contributions," also typically place in the top scores for customer satisfaction.
- **Heighten employee engagement and satisfaction.** People who feel recognized demonstrate greater innovation and creativity, take more personal responsibility, have a greater desire to contribute to the success of the company, and develop a stronger emotional bond to the organization and its goals. Recognized employees do more to help the company succeed, including lead, innovate, and serve customers.

Revamp Old-School Recognition

Most leaders believe they already are effective at recognition. During the past decade, we have consulted with hundreds of top leaders. Our problem has not been convincing them that purpose-based recognition can help them to achieve their goals. Our challenge is getting them to entertain the idea that they might be doing recognition wrong.

Most people report feeling unrecognized. Only 40 percent of employees report high engagement and high job

satisfaction, and two of every three people are looking for other work.

The problem, for most leaders, stems from approaching leadership from the old transactional approach where recognition is a tool to manipulate people to work harder and be more loyal, helping manager achieve their goals.

Since these managers approach recognition with themselves—rather than their employees—in mind, they look for quick-and-easy rewards requiring little thought or preparation, often settling for one-size-fits-all awards. Everyone gets a video rental certificate, a coffee card, a cash bonus, an event ticket, or candy bar.

Carrot Principle managers reward people for performing tasks that are valuable to the team or organization and that help employees achieve their personal goals. Such purpose-based recognition reinforces their self worth; it links people to the most important actions; it leverages people's unique strengths and their potential; and it provides proof of accomplishment for employees and their team members.

It all boils down to leaders and employees finding a sense of purpose at work through achieving shared goals. When that happens, recognition takes on a different look and feel. For example, one leader supervised a security guard who also had a passion for conservation. This savvy manager rewarded the guard with a new title: Security and Energy Conservation Officer. Now, during the man's security rounds, his auxiliary job is to turn off lights and close doors to keep in heat or cold. This simple change in duties and title brought job satisfaction to him and a tidy cost savings to the company.

Several years ago, St. Joseph hospital had a turnover rate of 32.5 percent. Within two years of implementing the *Carrot Principle*, St. Joseph doubled its operating margin from 1.5 to 3 percent. By the end of the third year, turnover had fallen to half its starting point, resulting in a \$4 million savings each year.

We invite you to put the *Carrot Principle* to work. Applying recognition principles within a context of goal-setting, open communication, trust, and accountability can make this be the best way you have to lead people. LE

Adrian Gostick and Chester Elton are the authors of four best-selling management books. This article is adapted from their new book, *The Carrot Principle* (Simon & Schuster). Visit carrots.com.

ACTION: Recognize your people in these areas.

Decision Leaders

They are both decision makers and mentors.



by Howard M. Guttman

LEADERS MAKE DECISIONS. Good decisions create value and define a leader's effectiveness. Poor decisions cast shadows over organizations and those who lead them.

In every business magazine, you'll find examples of both flawed decisions and shrewd decisions made by leaders. What distinguishes the leaders who consistently make wise decisions? As a leader, what can you do to improve your decision track record? Here are three ideas:

1. Go horizontal. The best decision-making leaders have "gone horizontal," meaning they have done away with the old hierarchical business model where decisions are made at the top and executed below. In horizontal organizations, decision-making responsibility is decentralized. Time-consuming, back-and-forth posturing and permission-seeking are swept away. Decisions are made by those closest to the action, with access to the most comprehensive, accurate information and responsibility for implementation. This results in faster, better decision-making and smoother execution. Leaders—from first-level supervisors to the CEO—need to reframe their thinking about leadership, view shared decision-making as a pivotal strategy for success, and provide teams with the information and skills needed to make the tough choices.

2. Use a four-step process. Sure, leaders are paid to make decisions. Some decisions can only be made by the leader, but many other decisions can and should be delegated. The horizontal leader provides team members with a process for identifying and handling both types of decisions. Be clear on what decisions face a team, who will make them, and how. Follow this four-step process for guiding your decision making:

- **Identify the decisions that need to be made.** Whether intact or time-limited, cross-functional or intra-functional, every team is responsible for an array of decisions. Effective leaders first work with the full team to develop a

list of these. The question is not who will make which decisions, but what key decisions will the team be making.

- **Identify decision sub-teams.** For each decision, assemble a sub-team that becomes responsible for making the decision. Identify the smallest number of people needed to make the decision quickly, efficiently, and with an eye to a quality outcome.

- **Assign accountability.** Every sub-team needs a point person who is



responsible for driving closure. Beware of the leadership reversion syndrome, which arises when the leader serves as the point person on too many sub-teams. It comes dangerously close to the old hierarchical model.

- **Select the decision-making mode.** There are three basic decision modes: *unilateral*—made by one person with no input from others, *consultative*—made by one person after getting input from others, or by *consensus*—everyone has input and everyone must agree.

Although most team decisions are made consultatively, no one way is necessarily superior to another, and no one way is appropriate for all types of decisions. No matter which mode is chosen, everyone must agree on and adhere to the selected mode.

For consultative decisions, the full team may identify the other relevant parties whose point-of-view will add value to the decision, or it may be left to the sub-team to select those with whom they will consult. In either case, ask: Who are the people who need to be involved: as information sources, evaluators of the information, assessors of risk, or future implementers?

Once a decision-making mode has been determined, set a deadline for the

sub-team. This gives everyone fair warning: If you want your voice to be heard, contact the sub-team before the deadline. Once the decision is made and announced to the full team, it is considered a *fait accompli*. The discussion should now move to how the decision will be communicated and implemented. Effective decision-making teams set a shelf-life for the decision, noting milestone dates when each should be revisited.

3. Overcome the challenges. In our observations of leaders who have gone through the process of delegating decision-making, we have identified four traps into which teams typically fall, along with tips to counteract them:

- **Deferring to the leader.** Team members tend to defer to you. Refuse to play along. Unless you are part of a sub-team, be judicious about offering your opinion to that team. Hold sub-teams accountable for making the decisions assigned to them.

- **The more, the merrier.** Make sure that everyone appointed to the sub-team adds value to the decision-making process. The price of admission should be proficiency, not position.

- **Clueless about closure.** Because a person has technical knowledge or occupies a certain position on the organization chart doesn't mean that he or she should be the point person for a decision. Driving a decision to closure requires influencing others and keeping them in process—leadership, not technical skills. If a selected point person doesn't have the necessary skills, arrange for coaching right away.

- **Forced unanimity.** Everyone doesn't have to agree with a decision, but everyone must be able to live with its outcome. Don't permit a sub-team to try to win over everyone; do make sure that everyone on the team makes a public commitment to abide by the decision once it is made. Don't permit second-guessing the sub-teams.

Today business leaders are both decision makers and decision mentors responsible for ensuring that the decision-making machine is whirring along; the right issues are being addressed; the right people are being deployed; decisions are being made in a timely fashion; and they are seamlessly communicated and implemented. They must learn to multiply good decisions, not just make them. LE

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ACTION: Multiply good decisions.

Performance Management

Use Six Sigma principles.



by Michael M. Grant

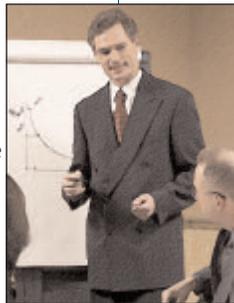
ALTHOUGH MANAGING the performance of people is often more challenging than ensuring an operations process produces no more than 3.4 defects per million (the goal of the Six Sigma), the same principles apply.

I find it odd that leaders who successfully use Six Sigma to manage product and service quality find performance management such a challenging and painful process. Most managers conceive of performance management as a once-a-year process, dread it, put it off, and then rush through it to get it over with quickly—like filing income taxes.

To achieve minimal defects goals, Six Sigma follows four steps, and the same steps can be used in managing people performance:

Step 1: Define what will be improved. As the strategic goals cascade from leaders on down, each person is assigned performance goals for a time. Make sure each person understands his or her goals, agrees to them, and sees how these align with strategic goals. Set expectations and then set SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-Bound) objectives. Most leaders and managers don't co-create SMART objectives with their people. Vague, un-measurable goals make for ambiguous performance.

Step 2: Decide how to measure the performance objective. How will people measure progress and report back? What will they measure? Cost, timeliness, quality, customer satisfaction, error reduction, quantity, what? Managers struggle with measurement, when the performance or behavior seems less quantifiable as in a competency like "teamwork" or "communication." Break down competencies or behavioral objectives into their component parts. "Teamwork", for example, could be made measurable if SMART objectives were related to: 1) on-time attendance at team meetings; 2) offers ideas to solve team problems; 3) communicates back to the team about indi-



vidual progress. Specific, measurable behavioral targets can be set for most behaviors of "teamwork." The measures might not be as "tight," but it is better than leaving important competencies unclear and unmeasured.

Step 3: Analyze the data. The data produced by performance measurement won't require the statistics Six Sigma does and can be done in brief, informal conversations about where the employee is, to date, on performance objectives (above, on target, below). The manager needs to ask: "How are you doing this week, month or quarter on your performance goal—what do the measures indicate?"

In areas in which a direct report is below an acceptable level of performance or, if on target, could do even better, specific coaching and developmental opportunities can be provided to help the employee improve. Engaging in improvement efforts can be added to the original performance objective and the effects of these efforts assessed to provide data for the next performance discussion.

Engage in analysis and improvement discussions frequently. Ongoing feedback and coaching about performance should occur monthly, if not weekly, and it can be brief and informal. A five-minute "check in" may be all that is needed. Keep giving positive feedback and coaching.

Step 4: Maintain performance improvements. Recognizing and rewarding good performance is a powerful way to maintain and reinforce it. Acknowledging gains, verbally or in writing (even in small ways), makes a big difference, since reinforced behavior is repeated. So, when you see your people improve their performance, reinforce it.

If you follow the four steps in managing your people's performance, then performance reviews can become reviews of the progress and development. Agreement on performance ratings for the period is less subjective because it is driven by data collected against each SMART objective. Applying Six Sigma steps to performance management better fulfills its real purpose—achieving the strategic goals by ensuring that each employee meet his or her goals. Six Sigma for people is the essence of performance management. LE

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ACTION: Improve your performance management.

Make Your Company a Great Place to Work

Promote positive relations.



by Stephen J. Cabot and Julius M. Steiner

MANY LEADERS FIND THAT AN EFFECTIVE means for reducing labor relations problems before they arise is to hire committed workers with positive attitudes. By developing a strategic HR plan that fosters a reputation as a great place to work, you attract productive workers who take pride in their work and their company.

In various venues, workers should get to express themselves to management. If you do not listen and respond positively, problems will fester and labor relations problems arise. You must communicate your interest in the welfare of employees by creating worker-friendly conditions that enable workers to control more of their lives.

Efforts to make the workplace more healthful and less stressful are appreciated by workers and result in greater productivity. For example, many companies now have on-site fitness programs, subsidize on-site fitness centers, and provide yoga or aerobic exercise classes. Companies may also provide unpaid sabbaticals for those who have been with the company for so many years or have seniority.

Menu of Incentives

Here is a menu of programs that can be combined and refined to satisfy the needs of workers and create a reputation as a great place to work.

1. **Recreation programs.** Sponsor video game tournaments, movie nights, trips to the theater, wine tasting trips, weekend skiing trips, and attendance at sporting events.

2. **Financial incentives.** Put a percentage of salaries into 401 (k) plans, offer free investment advice from professionals, and provide interest-free loans for college.

3. **Equitable advancement.** In companies with a large portion of female employees, more women should be promoted to managerial positions.

4. **Recipient gifts.** When a mother gives birth, she may be the grateful recipients of a cash bonus, a savings bond in the name of the new born child, and free at-home cleaning services for a time. New employees may get signing bonuses based upon their competence and experience. Their spouses might receive flowers.

5. **Mentor programs.** Assign a mentor to every new employee and plan non-work activities for mentors and mentees, such as baseball games, golf outings, lunches and dinners. New employees who are mentored tend to have high rates of productivity, quickly learn new tasks, and develop an appreciation of corporate goals.

6. **Sales goals.** If employees reach or exceed sales goals, they might receive a cash bonus, free membership in a health club, a night out at a favorite restaurant, play, or sporting event.

7. **Relax and enjoy life.** Employees may receive monthly massages, regular yoga classes, free manicures and makeovers; they may also be invited to participate in golf outings, company picnics, and other recreational activities.

8. **Training.** If companies provide workers with extra training that permits them to undertake increased responsibilities, they will feel increased loyalty. As management promotes from within, workers feel they have an incentive to achieve success. If employees take courses that are related to their job responsibilities, management may choose to pay for those courses.

9. **An ongoing strategic HR plan.** This develops your reputation as a great place to work. Build your reputation on a foundation of sincerely asking, listening, talking, and acting in response to employee needs and issues. Try to know each worker's name, job description, family background, and performance record. Your genuine concern builds trust. You can then open more channels of communication.

When people leave, conduct exit interviews to learn where to improve conditions, enhance the culture, and increase trust, credibility, and productivity. Express commitment to their welfare.

You develop a reputation as great place to work by devising and implementing a strategic HR plan that includes asking, listening, and conversing with employees, and by taking actions to meet their needs and expectations. **LE**

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ACTION: Create a positive work place.

Embrace Diversity

Build more effective teams.



by Marilyn Manning

HOW CAN YOU TURN A group of diverse individuals into a highly efficient team to complete complex projects and tasks? As a leader, you don't always get to hand-pick your team—you often inherit teams and all the baggage. You need to define desired outcomes, set measurable goals, design your game plan, set benchmarks and deadlines, and keep everyone focused on high-profile projects.

Real teams hold themselves accountable to apply their complementary skills to achieve a common purpose and meet performance goals. In forming teams, consider: What is our ideal size? What skills do we have—and need to add? How does each member contribute to our mission and purpose? Do we set, track, and meet performance goals? Do we set and live by behavioral ground rules and hold ourselves accountable?

I was once asked to facilitate problem-solving sessions with a team plagued by interpersonal conflicts. The team had five high achievers who had clear goals. One stated: "I don't see why we meet as a team when we have nothing in common." I couldn't find any evidence of collective work; however, when they talked about their roles and goals, they could see potential interconnections. Their conflicts were due to their isolation and lack of teamwork.

Effective teams do not encourage heroes or superstars. They look for ways to maximize their resources and build on each other's strengths. It may seem easier to work with people of similar styles, thinking and background, but diversity brings richness to a team. Embracing diversity means equal treatment and opportunity for people of all backgrounds, lifestyles, and beliefs.

A diverse team can bring together individuals with different backgrounds, approaches, and ways of thinking. An outstanding team has no subgroups, no "we" vs. "they" attitude. An effective

leader embraces differences, respects disagreement, and doesn't surround him or herself with "yes" people.

Once you have your diverse talent and agree on the team mission, define how your team will work together. Set and use ground rules: What are the decision-making procedures, roles, and problem-solving mechanisms?

Four-Step Process

This four-step process uses personal values as its foundation.

Step 1. Have people submit five values important to them. Examples might be honesty, accuracy, teamwork, creativity, and risk-taking.

Step 2. As a group, prioritize the values, and choose values that all can agree to.

Step 3. Define each value and why it is important for your team.

Step 4. Identify what behaviors and actions reinforce this value, and what behaviors can undermine it. List how you can reinforce the value and what you should avoid.

For example, you might identify the value of respect. Respect is needed to build loyalty and mutual trust. You reinforce respect by seeking others' input regarding decisions that may affect them. You undermine respect when you change direction without giving an explanation.

Take your team through this exercise to build teamwork. When a team participates in defining and enforcing the norms, ownership happens. Set only a few ground rules at a time. Ask your team: "What behaviors do we need to focus on next quarter?"

Once I worked with two warring divisions of a company. There was finger-pointing, blaming, and passing the buck. After discussing expectations, they agreed on one ground rule: "I will meet my deadlines. If I must extend the deadline, I'll negotiate with all affected parties to agree on the new deadline. I will notify all parties of any change at least 24 hours ahead."

When everyone followed this practice, it altered the way they worked together, changed their culture, and engendered more respect. Ground rules set improved behaviors as the norm; and when the team levies consequences, it reinforces desired changes. **LE**

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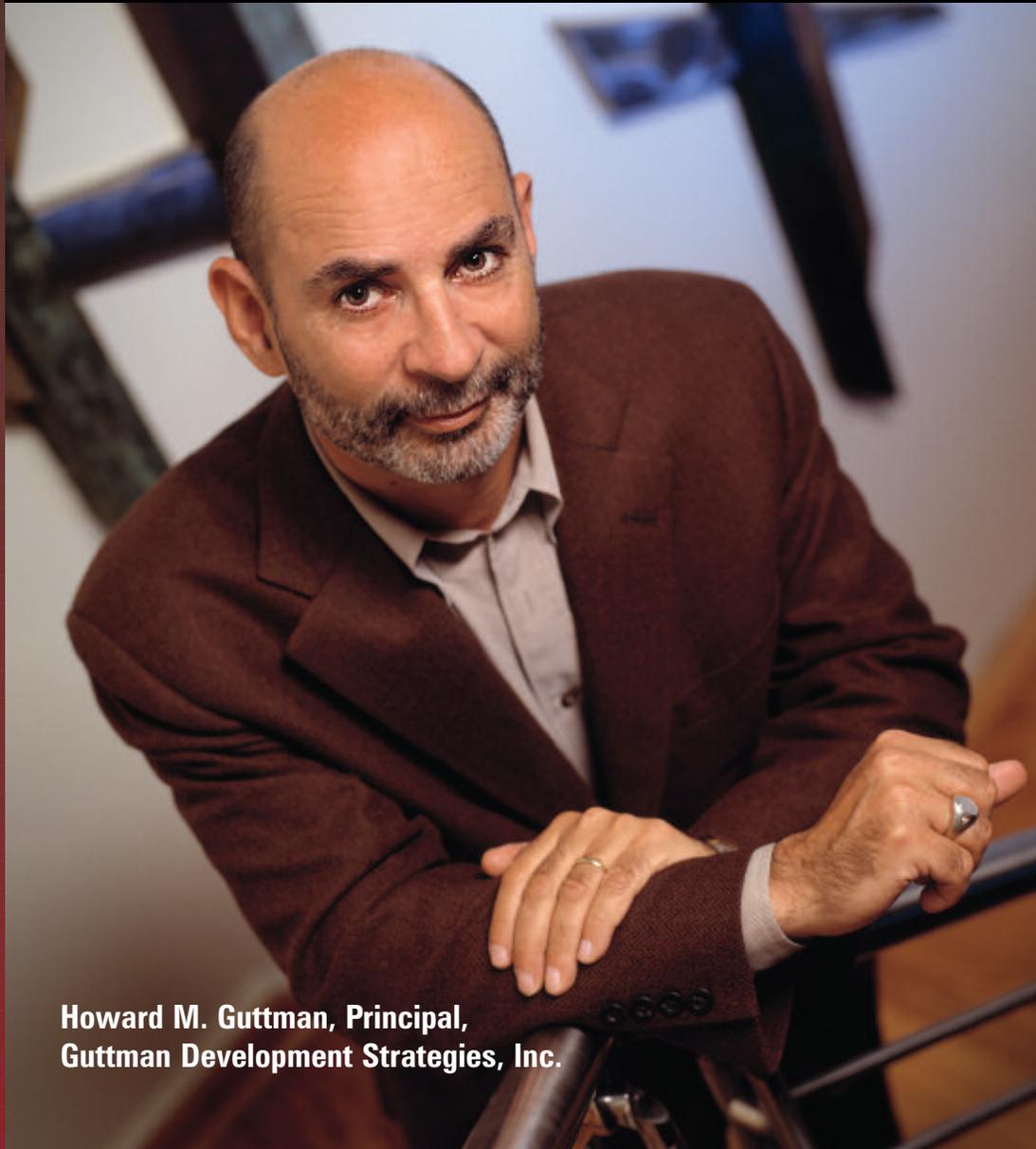
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