

Executive Insight >> Thought Leaders

A New Organization for a New Era Prerequisites for High Performance

“Our plans miscarry because they have no aim. If you do not know which harbor you are making for, no wind is the right wind”

Seneca the Younger
Roman Statesman

Vision is the ability to see something that does not yet exist. For centuries, people have used vision to frame their goals, hopes and aspirations, and to put plans and actions in place to pursue their dreams. So it is with organizations. Unless we have clarity about our direction, the actions we take and the decisions we make may be incongruent with our intent.

Companies are increasingly realizing that this truism extends beyond business and marketplace strategic planning, but also is vital when striving to define and create the style and culture of organization that is needed for competitive advantage. Hence, the proliferation of vision and mission statements in recent years.

This need, though, goes deeper than the creation of a few buzzwords that hang resplendent in corporate hallways. It requires a serious consideration of the many interrelated elements of organizational life that in summary constitutes a truly high performance organization. It then requires that initiatives commence to help steer the company towards this desired state in a highly proactive way, and that decisions are made against this backdrop on an ongoing and consistent basis.

In these early years of the 21st century the challenges that face business leaders are becoming increasingly complex and diverse, and the following represents a vision of the essential elements that will characterize truly high performing organizations.

While the words speak of the future, they are written in the present tense so that they may inspire our actions and behaviors to create such organizations. The words are more than motherhood and apple pie - they are a roadmap of key elements for companies to design-in to their organizations if they are to sustain business performance and competitive advantage.

- A clear vision and common sense of purpose pervades the organization
- Clearly articulated and sharply focused business metrics exist, and are readily available, that everyone understands, buys in to and uses as their point of reference to define success. Success is celebrated and rewarded
- A constant drive to improve performance is exhibited throughout. Breakthrough results are achieved through the constant reframing of all business processes and activities
- Mindsets are decidedly global, and this translates into boundaryless thinking, actions and strategy. The company constantly benchmarks best in class companies to learn and improve
- Organizational leaders have a clear view of their role and exhibit consistent behaviors that constantly reinforce these responsibilities. They are skilled and credible coaches
- Open communication is natural and constant
- Business systems and processes provide an integrated and networked infrastructure to drive speed and simplicity of data collection, analysis, decision making, transactions and communication
- A flexible and skilled workforce exists that understands changes in customer requirements and works to satisfy those requirements by shifting its resources quickly and easily
- People are treated fairly and with respect. Trust and integrity are fundamental principles of business operation
- The work environment is stimulating
- A clearly articulated business strategy exists that everyone understands and buys in to
- A constant focus on customers is exhibited throughout
- Speed of transaction, cycle time reduction, and swiftness of decision making pervade all business processes
- The creation, sharing and development of knowledge are investment priorities
- A flat organizational hierarchy exists in which decisions are made and implemented at the most effective level
- Core competencies throughout the organization are known, valued, developed and rewarded. Where core competency does not exist, processes and activities are outsourced
- Employees have the opportunity to be creative, exhibit innovation and take responsible risk without fear of reprisal

- The organization, and all of its members, refuses to tolerate practices that inhibit progress
- Workforce diversity is valued and seen as a source of competitive strength. Harassment or discrimination of any nature is not tolerated
- Reward and recognition systems support business strategy
- The company stands as a good corporate citizen, and complies with all laws and regulations
- A safe and pleasant work environment is maintained
- People work hard and have fun



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