

## *Leading and Building Human Capital*

Twenty-first century leadership is complex; teams of people are needed rather than a few talented individuals working on their own. Leaders must possess superior people skills, aligning their strengths, with organizational needs.

### ***Why do we need highly evolved, effective leaders?***

Our society appears to be crying out for people with soulful wisdom leading with both the head and the heart. Leaders of the past looked or were perceived to lead from the heart and the mind, only later to be exposed as superficial by others. However today, being politically correct will no longer suffice in the high-demand world of leading in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### ***True leaders organize people toward causes.***

Today's social and organizational ills resist yesterday's best practices. What was seen as effective then is no longer true or what's needed today in the workplace. A great leader knows what their people need, going beyond what they want and what is perceived as needed. People want many things, however listening to what they "need" is essential in gaining trust and respect thereby leading to popularity in becoming a successful leader.

### ***Why should succession planning be a part of your organizations plan?***

Your people have been crying out for more leaders who lead from the heart and the mind. Those who practice transparency and honesty opposed to a superficial leadership style are gaining in popularity. Working with clients in a multitude of industries with varying sizes, I see the obvious and understand what's needed. As a trusted advisor and executive coach, it is my business to know my client's business. My job is to investigate what's actually occurring, dig deep, and interpret the facts.

Many times it's pure common sense to determine what needs to be done. Having a good succession plan is a best practice and makes good business logic. It is like having a reserve in your bank account. It needs replenishing and managing while looking for healthy ways to reinvest. This is the same approach to building and investing in human capital. Succession starts at the recruiting and hiring phase. Wise words from a great man stated "Begin with the end in mind" (Stephen Covey), author of 7 habits of highly effective people.

### ***Begin with the end in mind***

Recognizing the individuals possibilities up front (e.g., does the individual possess leadership acumen? Can he or she do the job you require them to do? Are they in alignment with company's core values and goals?) and keeping away from the "shiny objects" will allow you and the company to focus on those individuals who are qualified for the position.

I see hiring managers and/or leaders who are a part of the team conducting an executive interview to only "fall in love" with the candidate's educational background, talent, or who they know, which reflects only a portion of what's required in the position. Another critical element in this equation includes the candidate's qualification to lead people.

Beginning with the end in mind, see the bigger picture. Visualize the path of the right candidate. What are their values, strengths, opportunities for growth, the type of training, coaching, and mentoring they will need to evolve into their future leadership position you need them to fill and the job they will be required to undertake. Ensuring that the investment your organization is making in future leaders will cultivate the kind of head and heart leaders people hunger for.

### ***Highly effective leaders are not accidentally designed***

In my opinion leaders are born. When we see a child who possesses a natural ability to inspire others, attract a crowd, or lead we say, this kid is going to be a great leader someday. As the individual matures and sets sail on the path of a potential future leader he or she begins the journey of gaining experience, is compelled to take on tasks of managing others, take risks, and learns that relationships is the key to their success. The difference between a good leader and a great leader is that the great leader listens, inspires thought from their people, practices transparency, consistently shares the vision, leads with the heart and the mind, uses his or her experience, and wisdom to make decisions. Don't misunderstand when I say "leading from the heart" as a kumbaya method. If you're listening, this is a good time to reassess your intentions and approaches. Here's the paradigm shift, we are in a new world where people want to see their leaders display a more human approach to business. They want to know that their future leaders will recognize their participation and contribution are as important to the success of the company, period. So, even if the natural born leader is created they still need help developing.

### ***Mastering Leadership Habits***

As we keep our attention on carefully selecting and grooming our future leaders there are some critical elements that need to be passed along while developing great leadership. Always have at least three strong rules and stick to them. Like any good parent- repeating yourself a lot and acting in ways that are consistent with the rules. These are keys to providing a company with a strong cultural foundation. Another critical component is ensuring that the company has good systems and structures in place to ensure stability and support as the organization grows. This is most dire for smaller companies. Regardless the size of a company this final business practice is a biggie. Accountability, it begins from the top down. As goes leadership and their team goes the rest of the firm. Whatever strengths or weaknesses exist within the organization can be traced right back to the cohesion of the executive team and their levels of trust, competence, discipline, alignment, and respect.

### ***Navigating the ship***

One afternoon while working with a client who is the founder and President of a fortune 500 company, in my frustration with him I said, "Jeff, you just need to get out of your own way!" He didn't know what I meant by that statement. Like many decision makers, it is tough letting go of control especially when the company is growing, shifting, decisions are being made by other executives who are responsible for passing on the vision and goals of the company and making sure organizational goals and people are on target. As the captain of the ship it's your job to hold and communicate the vision consistently, effectively over and over again in many different ways. As the organization evolves your daily interactions with employees becomes less, your priorities should be shifting as well. In my position, I see where business leaders (especially smaller companies) find it difficult to let go and let the people that they hired do what they are paid and hired to do, their job!

So, the next time you're tempted to get in the way of productivity, don't. Many leaders have the tendency to get sucked into the "daily minutia" and the distractions are just too much. That's why we have a crew. We hire others and delegate responsibility to ensure that they are accountable and in control making sure the ship is headed in the right direction while they consistently and effectively communicate the vision and direction.

Even though the 20th-century leadership is the same as their 21st-century leadership- to accomplish goals through groups rather than individuals, the process has changed. Long gone is the hierarchical type setting, top down, unidirectional leading is something of the past. Today, with the increase in the levels of education, people desire to participate. Educated people want to be collaborators. The role of the leader is to harness the brain trust and merge the cumulative experience, wisdom, and insights of the participants. In this age of super highway and information overload, leaders cannot know everything they need to lead, and must rely on others. As leaders it is our social responsibility to build and sustain human capital in our organizations. As we look for ways to continue to build healthy companies, we rely on people to innovate, solve our problems, and stay competitive. It is ultimately our people skills, relationships, and aligning our strengths and what we do best with the organization's needs that we all win.

*Imagine the possibilities...*

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Wishing you a successful 2013!

*Laura Perez*  
CEO, Executive Coach  
Epiphany Coaching