Core Processes Of Strategic Leadership

One of the most important role of a leadership team, one that is accountable for the whole of a business or a business unit, is that of providing strategic leadership. This strategic nature of leadership comes about through *three core processes*: one of which serves to develop the *will* of the organization to persevere and rise above difficulties; another which serves to develop the *being* of the organization in terms of character and qualitative characteristics in the people and in the product offerings they are charged with creating, and a third which serves to develop the *functioning* capability of the organization through understanding the overall ideal pattern that is meant to ensure continuing regeneration of the business. The tendency among most management groups is to fail to rise to the level of *strategic* leadership and instead manage only an elemental set of measures that are aimed at overseeing the functioning activities of the organization. This fails to produce a cohesive guiding light that galvanizes a cadre of unified individuals which enables an infusion of spirit back toward leadership and into the organization.

Three Core Processes of Strategic Leadership

Strategic Leadership generates and transmits a *direction* for the business, provides guidance to *producing effectiveness* in regard to the direction, and ensures that an *enriched benefit* is offered to all constituent stakeholders. This work is best carried out by an energetic, multi-level team from across the whole of the organization. The initiating core process of strategic leadership is setting the overall business *direction* which provides connection across the organization with the nature of distinctiveness and spirit that the business plans to bring into the everyday existence of a market and the evolution of form they hold to be unique in what the business can offer. The core process of direction-setting ensures that an organization can move rapidly and resolutely with a unifying sense of cohesion and without sacrificing agility.

The second core process emerges from providing restraints in a way that a heightened state of being is developed among organization members and their product offerings. By providing restraints in a developmental way—where people can be self-organizing and self-correcting within an overall set of effectiveness parameters—leadership can promote the development of character and qualitative characteristics and ensure clarity about what needs to be brought into being. Focusing on character and characteristics in people and in products enables people in *producing* output with a higher degree of ownership and with confidence that their efforts will induce viability and vitality for themselves, the business unit, and the future.

The third core process of strategic leadership is—in the day to day operating and working of the business—maintaining a connection to the whole for themselves and others such that in the final analysis the *enriched benefit* gained will demonstrate that all the work was worth the effort for all constituent stakeholders. This causes all conflicts and diversions to be reconciled to the overall benefit of all constituent stakeholders hence providing the boundary within which people feel inspired to continuously evolve their capability and ableness to contribute. When we instead turn to focusing our activities on auditing elemental parts and, further, do not seek to evaluate the overall value projected for all stakeholders, it is apparent to the organization that we are not wholistic in our thinking and fosters similar processes in them. This nature of segmentation of work cannot provide a framework in which people can truly use their judgment effectively, but encourages them to use only their sensory functions thereby inviting automation of their thinking energies instead of applying conscious and creative energies. Even when our superiors provide us with only elemental views, we can mentally construct the whole and bring this to our organization as the

means for assessing our functioning effectiveness.

Direction: The Will Generator

The *direction* for the business is a result of a sense of *conviction* among the leadership that is conveyed to the whole of the organization, and is then carried forward based on a philosophy or approach that arises from values and ethics that tells us "what is *right*". It gives guidance to people on how to develop themselves behaviorally in order to be *appropriate* to and in harmony with the direction.

Conviction: comes from the sense that a systemic, rather than a linearly systematic, analysis of appropriate *facts* has been considered; that the facts have been evaluated within a set of *values* that are holistic and inspiring, and that these facts and values have been carefully thought through in a way that produces an integrated and accurate interpretation of the world around us at this point in history. This kind of leadership renews the organization's spirit and willfulness though developing and guiding the organization with *beliefs* that reflect this meaningful integration. They hold these beliefs up to themselves and others rigorously and do not sacrifice them in the face of expediency.

e.g. When U. S. President, John. F. Kennedy in the early 60s saw that school children's math and science scores were falling to all-time lows, he knew this would lead to a loss of technological strength in the long run for the nation. He believed that creating a mission that called for going beyond what was currently knowable and doable would re-ignite the education systems of the nation. This belief led his advisors to generate the idea of calling for putting a ". . . man on the Moon by the end of the decade". (This since the Soviet Union had already put the first man in space.) The belief in the idea of an inspiring mission came from seeing the possibility of integration of the naturally competitive nature of Americans in providing leadership with the need to inspire children and educators. This led to a decade of renewed spirit among scholars, educators, and children in regard to pursuing competency in math and science driven by a desire to participate in such an endeavor.

Similar examples of different scope occur in homes and businesses as well. A strategic leadership group can use the instrument of *interactively developing* beliefs that embody these characteristics as means of generating conviction among all the members of an organization. On the other hand too often we fail to share the background (or source) of our facts, values, and interpretations that lead to the beliefs we hold. We should not be overly surprised when people do not demonstrate the same resoluteness that we feel when they are not involved in the deepest understanding of the source and meaning of the beliefs we, as leaders, hold.

Right: The conviction that comes from such beliefs must then be tempered and sharpened by working within a *philosophical* framework clarifying *"what is right"*. Human beings are innately ethical and moral and aspire to live their lives in a way that this is consistently so. They will identify themselves with an approach to change that they feel is inherently *"right"* in that it appeals to an intellectual reasoning and a sense of fundamental truth. For example, one philosophy is that "we work only with approaches to change that allow people to bring more of themselves into the work and have a systemic nature that fosters integration.". Even though this may seem obviously desirable, frequently leadership may fall into working from of a philosophy of "getting the most out of people" which can lead to participation but does not really give people the sense of ownership that is possible—to the contrary, it most often fosters cynicism and frustration.

For example, a developmental approach to doing business is a philosophy stemming from a way of working that says that all activities, what ever the nature of work, should cause people to develop and be able to embed more of their own uniqueness into all

products and processes and the way work is designed.

It is based on a belief that creativity is sparked by the above opportunity which is harnessed to and inspired by the understanding surrounding specific product systems in the market for the expression of this creative energy. This tends to be uplifting to people in an organization because each person sees themselves as able to be more tomorrow than they are today.

The philosophy becomes the anchor for the organization in terms of how it carries out its work and tends to cross beyond issues and projects. Therefore if the above example were the organization's philosophy of business, the organization and all of its members would strive to avoid conducting any meeting or initiating any change that did not make optimum use of the opportunity to develop as many people as possible, because to do otherwise would not "be right". This is not a 'sink or swim' approach; it means that when evolving business needs require it, the organization expands its capacity by evolving capability of the organization and all of its members. This was part of the philosophy of John Kennedy and brought about inspiration and devotion to mission among the people who worked in the field he generated.

Appropriateness: Will is primarily an inner phenomenon (or an inner interaction with external influences) and, as such, can be enabled by encouraging people to define what is appropriate in terms of behavior. Encouragement of this type fosters the development of behavior in order for people to become increasingly self-organizing, self-auditing, and self-correcting. Leadership in many organizations has assumed the role of disciplining whereby people do learn about what is appropriate but not from the philosophical base of development; often this leads to mimicking a behavior without any rationale for its existence. Internalizing the development of a behavior requires a transformation, a "change in a fundamental way that invites one to a higher state", and can only come from a personal commitment to principles that we have worked though and

philosophically rationalized for ourselves and then internalized. This commitment has to be worked through by facing and understanding all the justifications that invite us to disregard the principle. It is not uncommon for organizations to create principles that are missing the characteristics and qualities that enable commitment. In order for principles to be developmental, the principle cannot be based purely on function, but must require something of us in terms of using judgment. Further if the principle indicates only two possibilities—we do it or do not do it—and does not call for us to develop and grow in order to live up to it, it does not tend to foster the *will* to awaken. Lacking the reflective process associated with will development, there is little limited chance for generating lasting commitment and allegiance.

Developmental principles indicate the desired caliber of structuring (of thinking, organization, product) and by their nature give guidance to enable people to pursue an increased level of ableness and progressive improvement. Otherwise they tend to be soon conveniently put aside in favor of dealing with the pressures of daily existence.

Example: We may hold the principle that "we increasingly work with the potential in people rather than their problems and to draw out their essence qualities in the way they each work and in the products they each contribute to producing. Further we will encourage self-discipline in this regard by asking questions aimed toward generating reflection and by providing information needed for making good judgments and provide external evaluations only when we can see how they can raise the quality of energy of the team or group."

On reflection we can see a great deal of room for development in such a principle We immediate know we have to learn to look past the issues we have with others' personalities. We have to remind ourselves about our belief regarding whether everyone is capable of development. We also know that this will take effort and that we must work on it every day with the intention of improving our own

capability over time. A person can be self-accountable in regard to this principle. People tend to welcome help from others if it is in the form of questions that foster self-accountability and personal reflecting capability, but the primary role of principles is the creating of a self-disciplining mindset in those developing them—whether they be individuals, teams, or businesses.

If in *developing will,* leadership works toward developing, expressing, and living up to high energy beliefs, works with articulating and living from a wholistic philosophy that is correspondent with the higher ethics and values humans hold, and works from principles that require everyone to develop and to continuous advance the quality of what they structure in the world (in our thinking, our products, our technologies), the will of the organization will be awakened and an attendant rise in conviction, a consciousness of doing what is "right", and an aspiration to develop oneself according the needs of the future will also awaken. If you compare successful long-term focused businesses where inspired workforces abound, you will find these core processes at work, whether they are consciously carried out or are more intuitively carried out.

Exercise:

Before doing the exercise, read completely though it and discuss the examples in terms of how they meet or fall short of the standards you felt attracted to in the paper you have just read.

Then develop your own thinking by working first individually on each question for a few moments before sharing your thoughts with your subgroup. *Record your work as a group on a flip chart*

1.   Taking the topic, "managing a successful business", what 1-2 beliefs do you feel conviction in regard to and would work from if you were the final authority?. Discuss the <u>*facts, values, and interpretations*</u> that lead you to this conviction.

e.g.   Continuously reducing our effectiveness through reducing functions and workforce will not give us the flexibility to work on continuous improvements and will cause us to lose power, operational stability and erosion of margins as our products are less and less distinctive. I belief strongly that *we should work from calculating our over-all profit and return picture and do what is required to ensure an energized workforce that is the source of overcoming cost and waste problems, rather than seeing them as a cost on the same plane as materials and technologies.*

2.   Reflect on your statement of belief. Given that there are many ways to pursue any belief, what is your philosophical stance in this regard. Since we do not often share our philosophy—even with ourselves, this may take some quiet reflection time before talking as a group. Be sure to include your reasoning, your thoughts about how this effects our ableness as an organization, or what is required in capability to do what is right, and what you think we should remember even in the heat of battle. We can sometimes get at this in a backhanded way, by asking what does not seem "right" to me sometimes about the way we do things around here. This feeling is usually generated because the approach feels in conflict with our personal attitude or philosophy about *how* we should do something even when we may agree with *what* should be done.

e.g.   Aligning the organization to external evaluation of the effect and effectiveness of downstream stakeholders in the value-adding process inspires desire to contribute and to develop new capabilities to do so. So our approach should be to *work from a value-adding approach to understanding our work and results and to build that capability into the*

organization as a whole thereby enabling the redesign of what we call work in a continuously self-organizing way

3.   Select a few venues where this belief (about which you feel conviction) and philosophy (you feel reflects what is "right" for the business) seem particularly important   and vulnerable and think about what justifications we tend to use to not live up to the belief and philosophy in these venues. (e.g. hiring, restructuring).
What should we change about how we are thinking in this situation? What should be our commitment be to. Write a principle in a way that might remind you of the value of this change we have specified especially when we are failing into our "justifying" mode?

e.g.   Project installation
When we are rushed we tend to forget about how hard people are working. We also may not notice that people feel they are not able to work up to their own standards because of the demands we are making on them for speed. We tend to rush to tell them, when they express complaints or make suggestions, that there are "business needs" that give us no flexibility. We often make them feel more insecure by re-minding them that we do not want to be in the same place as Hamburg finds itself. We instead attempt to get them to work harder without complaint leaving them with what seem like unreasonable demands. Our principle needs to be *to cause ourselves to develop a rationale that ties to real marketplace improvements we are trying to make and sharing our thinking with our workforce rather than just the output of our thinking in terms of expected compliance with demands or requests.* We know that people work better when they feel they are a part of the business rather than just cogs in a wheel, and after a while being very good cogs is not enough. *People must be full business partners including understanding the effects of their actions in the product systems where products are sold and used, and be enabled to take corrective and creative action to improve the effectiveness of consumers and customers.*