

WHAT DO YOU STAND FOR?

How to build a strong foundation for your business

In the book, “Judgment: How Winning Leaders Make Great Calls,” Noel Tichy and Warren Bennis state, “Judgment is the essential genome of leadership.” They add, “While misjudgments in any domain can be fatal, the one where a misstep is most damaging is poor judgment about the people on your team.”

Tichy and Bennis have articulated what many of us know from experience. We’ve demonstrated poor judgment or seen poor judgment in action when it comes to building an effective team. So how do we maximize the opportunities we have to build effective teams? Here are a few suggestions that provide a foundation for building a leadership team before you even address whom to put on your team.

Clearly define your value

One of the first considerations in building a leadership team is being clear about the value you’re trying to create. In last month’s column, we discussed the importance of knowing your primary organizational strength. The roles that need to be represented on your team need to support the value you’re creating.

Let’s use UPS as an example. Its primary organizational strength is operational efficiency.

The value to the customer is dependable, cost-effective

delivery. When thinking about building a leadership team for an organization like UPS, it seems logical that one team member needs to have operations as his or her sole focus.

If, however, you are leading a social service organization, while your processes need to be efficient, it probably won’t be your primary organizational strength. Your operations may fall under another function such as finance. However, talent management is critical. You may want to consider having someone outside of your transactional HR function serving on your senior team since your value is so critically linked to the attraction, retention and development of your people.

Of course, everyone on your leadership team is critical to your success. Each team member has different roles that will depend on your organizational strength. The key question is, “What functional leadership do you need to ensure that you’re building the value you’ve agreed on?”

Clearly define your role as CEO

As leader of your team, you serve two broad functions: One is to ensure the organization’s goals are met. The other is to ensure that your team has the resources it needs to meet those goals.

In order to do the first, you need to lead the team in defining who you are as an organization. This includes, but isn’t limited to, your organizational purpose, direction, how you’re different or better

than your competition and the behaviors that are key to your success.

You also need to lead the team in creating shared goals that support your identity. What will you do to make the identity come alive and how will you measure your progress over time? You need to ensure that the team has resources to meet your goals. This includes having the necessary talent, setting the right measures and ensuring the commitment to measurement and adaptation when you’re not meeting your goals.

Clearly define the purpose of your team

Other than being your direct reports, why does your team exist? What purpose does it serve? Here are a few suggestions:

Your team exists to be stewards of your identity and shared goals.

Individual leadership team members lead and serve their teams by ensuring they have set goals that support the entire organization and that resources are available to meet those goals.

Leaders need to model the behavior outlined in your organizational identity. You need to live and demonstrate what you expect from others.

Leadership team members hold each other accountable for the goals you co-create.

Unless you address these three steps first, even the best leaders can flounder in helping your organization create the future you long for. <<

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