

A NEW YEAR, A NEW ERA OF SUCCESS

"Everybody is ignorant, only on different subjects."
Will Rogers

Nobody's perfect. In fact, the closest a person usually comes to perfection is when he or she fills out a job application form. The renowned business mind, Peter Drucker stated, "The top management tools require at least four different kinds of human being." Drucker identified these four types as "... the thought man, the action man, the people man and the front man." Drucker went on to admit that, "These four temperaments are almost never found in the same person." From a different perspective, Dr. Ichak Adizes, a leading expert on organizational performance and change, wrote that "...everyone is a good leader (in some situations) and no one is a good leader (forever, under all situations)."

Of the business colleagues you most admire and respect – meaning those who really accomplished incredible things – it's safe to assume not one of these individuals is perfect. Richard Nixon was a U.S. President who opened doors with China, but very few people would label him as the ideal leader. It's important to understand that "good enough" can trump perfection. The key to success is correctly understanding the needs and demands of any given role at a specific point in time.

DEFINING EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP AND YOUR NEEDS

"The indispensable first step to getting the things you want out of life is this: decide what you want."
Ben Stein

The ultimate success of leadership relies on two different – but equally important – parties: the organization and the employee.

On a day-to-day basis, almost all organizations endorse a paradox: 99% of job descriptions don't accurately reflect reality. This may not seem very important until you realize how much of an organization's success in recruiting, developing, and retaining the very best individuals still relies on the written job description.

You can test this hypothesis by looking at your own job description and applying some honest self-appraisal. Under your key responsibilities, there is likely a minimum of 10 different areas of responsibility listed. Are you exceptional at every one of them? Most job descriptions tend to be an exercise in compiling such a broad set of responsibilities that no one person could ever excel across the board.

Successful leadership is about understanding and accepting objective realities and building from these truths.



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SETTING ORGANIZATIONAL GOALS AND MEASURING SUCCESS

"Great leaders are almost always great simplifiers, who can cut through argument, debate, and doubt to offer a solution everybody can understand."

General Colin Powell

Organizations striving to achieve a new level of success can look at the strategy many private equity firms incorporate in outlining their ultimate goals. Private equity firms ensure each leadership role in the organization has a very clear, measurable, and concise mandate for the next two to three years. Typically, they set goals such as cutting costs by a certain percentage, bringing in a defined number of customers, and increasing their return on investment (ROI) by a stated amount. By outlining precise goals, staying focused on the short term, and using stated metrics, these firms – and their employees – all work from the same page, setting the stage for success.

Another key component when creating an environment that fosters

success is the employees that will help you get there. You already know that people are vital to the success of any organization. We've all seen and heard examples of what can happen to an organization with weak leadership. Yet we know that many of the most important business decisions – like succession planning, hiring externally, or internal promotions – are made based on job descriptions that do not reflect objective reality. Imagine what would happen if an organization were to use a poorly conceived payback calculation to make \$200,000 capital outlay! In the same light, it's tremendously difficult to effectively decide the best person to hire or promote if you can't clearly articulate what really needs to get done and the skills that will be required to do so.

THE TIMES, THEY ARE A-CHANGING

Successful organizations need to think differently and specifically about what's most important to employees. It's not enough to assume people's needs are the same as they were 10 years ago. Consider this:

- According to Business Week (December 10, 2007), the average tenure for a CEO is 44 months and for a Chief Marketing Officer is 26 months (U.S. statistic)
- Only 25 percent of the current Fortune 500 CFOs have stayed longer than five years at any one company
- The average tenure for a CIO these days is four years and five months, according to data collected from 558 heads of IT in a recent "State of the CIO" survey (Source: *CIO Magazine*)



MARKETING 101: GIVE THEM WHAT THEY WANT (AND GOOD THINGS HAPPEN)

"Most of our assumptions have outlived their usefulness."
Marshall McLuhan

Great employees want to be engaged, and are ready to move when they're not. The younger the employee, the less likely they are to believe that a longer tenure equates to career success.

Given most people are great at one thing, add to the mix the need to clearly define roles and success metrics, as well as the wanderlust of many top-tier employees described in this newsletter, conversations with top-caliber talent should sound like this, "Jane, we know you excel and thrive at developing new markets and, as our Chief Marketing Officer, we need you to develop and implement a strategy to create \$200 million of new business in the important U.S. market. This goal must be achieved in two years, and our expectation is that by year one, we will see 10 new customers and \$75 million in revenue. Once you hit your targets, the Chief Marketing Officer role will evolve into one that requires a different skill set, likely requiring someone else for the role. At that point, we will either find a role at our company that taps into your strengths, or help you move to another organization where your strengths will be best put to use." This approach is honest and deals with the realities of both the organization and the employee. It works by putting only truly exceptional performers into roles that they'll enjoy and excel at, and then clearly defining goals that will build on these employees' core strengths.

This approach also deals with the reality that most employees don't want to stay in the same role forever. They want to do what they love and are great at, and then move on to the next exciting challenge.

Problems arise when an organization seeks deep and broad generalists (a contradiction in terms) instead of specialists. Taking the Chief Marketing Officer role as an example, these individuals are usually expected to:

- 1 manage the overall marketing function
- 2 grow and develop staff
- 3 contribute to overall company strategic direction
- 4 direct ad campaigns across numerous medias and channels
- 5 manage a large budget
- 6 lead a sales team
- 7 work on new initiatives
- 8 focus on CRM development
- 9 implement and build co-operative relationships across all boundaries

The breadth and depth of skills required are immense and unachievable in any meaningful way. There's simply no such thing as a successful generalist. And, a company cannot excel in today's complex business world with people who are anything less than exceptional in the one area that is central to their – and the organization's – success.

This new era of the functional achieving specialist calls for leadership roles that embrace singular and focused business needs. And, organizations need to define measures so key leadership roles start looking more like:

- Innovators-in-chief who push for breakthroughs
- Dealmakers who can merge, wheel/deal with the best of them
- Communicative collaborators who create an environment of teamwork, bringing different units together as one
- People-come-first types who can recruit, retain, deploy, and grow talent

Defining specific roles and goals, and then hiring individuals with the singular talent to succeed in their area of expertise, creates a strong – yet challenging – mandate that attracts, taxes, and thrills your high-performing employees. It also maximizes the likelihood that both meaningful change and meaningful growth happen in your business.

Speak to Search Strategies today at 416.789.2700 or info@searchstrategies.ca to put a plan in place that helps your organization achieve even greater success.