

The One Advantage You Need To Lead Out Of Troubled Times

It's been tough economic times in my home province of Alberta due to a halving of the price of oil, yet there is a cautious consensus that things are stabilizing and people are starting to hire and grow.

As people start to hire they are surprised to realize that there is as much business risk in growth as there is contraction; but what do leaders need to get the full advantage out of growing?

There is minimal competitive advantage gained from strategy, technology, finance or marketing. These disciplines are important as they can set one company apart from another and knowledge on each has become ubiquitous and democratic. Any organization, of any size, has unlimited access to the best thinking and practices around any of those subjects.

The one remaining, untapped, simple, reliable and virtually free competitive advantage is a healthy and strong culture of leadership.

A culture of leadership can eliminate politics and confusion from the environment, cause productivity and morale to soar and prevent good people from leaving. The smartest organization in the world can fail if it does not have a culture of leadership - just look at Uber.

I've seen it time and again when a healthy culture of leadership will always find a way to succeed, because it will tap into every bit of human intelligence that it has. I have led volunteers & staff to respond to some of the largest disasters of our time by unleashing human talent.

Why haven't more companies embraced and reaped the benefits of culture of leadership?

Quite frankly, it's hard, it requires real work and focused discipline ... therefore it has no appeal for those looking for a quick fix.

But the biggest reason is that it requires courage.

Leaders must be willing to confront themselves, their peers, and the dysfunction within their organization with honesty and persistence. They must be prepared to walk straight into uncomfortable situations and address issues that prevent them from realizing the potential that eludes them.

What exactly does an organization have to do to develop a culture of leadership? There are three simple but difficult steps:

1. **Build a Tight Leadership Team** - Get the leaders of the organization to behave in a functional, cohesive way. If the people responsible for running an organization are

behaving in a dysfunctional manner, that dysfunction will cascade into the rest of the organization and success.

2. **Create & Communicate Clarity** - The second step for building a healthy organization is ensuring that the members of that leadership team are aligned and clear on topics why the organization exists and what are the highest important priorities. Leaders must eliminate any gaps that exist between them, so that people have complete clarity about what they need do to make the organization successful.

Then over-communicating that clarity. Leaders building a culture of leadership personally and consistently repeat themselves and reinforce what is true and important. This action sets leaders of healthy organizations apart.

3. **Reinforce** - Leaders must ensure any process that involves people, from hiring and firing to performance management and decision-making, is designed to intentionally support and emphasize the success of the organization.

Can an organization with a healthy culture of leadership fail? Yes.

When politics, ambiguity, dysfunction and confusion are reduced, people are freed to design, serve clients, solve problems and help one another in ways that will leave unhealthy organizations behind as you turn the economic corner.

Healthy organizations recover from setbacks, attract the best people, repel the others, and create opportunities that at the end of the day, create an environment of success.

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