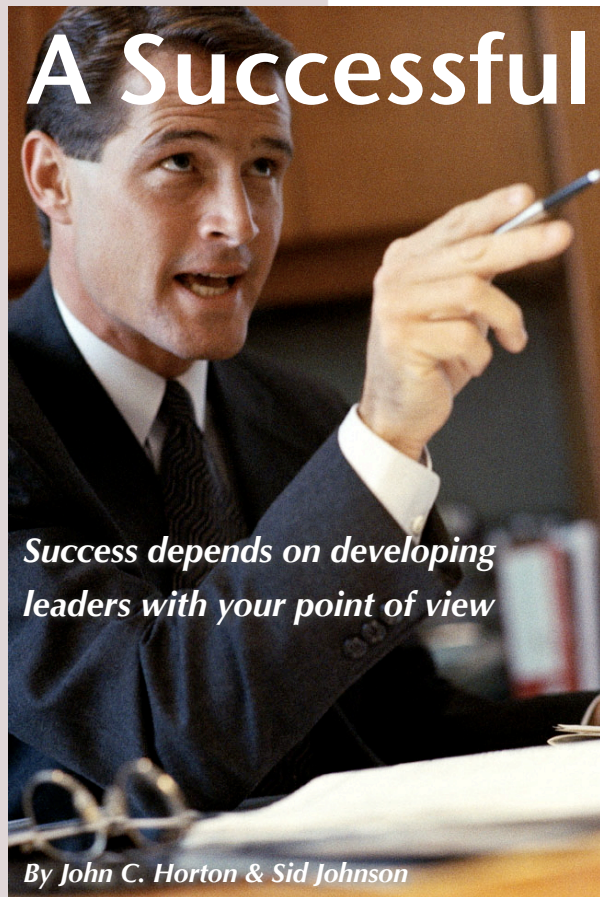


A Successful Point of View



Success depends on developing leaders with your point of view

By John C. Horton & Sid Johnson

Today's winning business models increasingly achieve and maintain success through the many decisions that are made on the front lines as much as the decisions made in the corner office. Thus, the highest calling of an organizational leader is to teach and develop leaders throughout the organization.

To this end, the best leaders develop a clearly stated message and a process that sets direction, promotes understanding of the direction, and builds leaders who are able to work toward that direction. Noel Tichy, a leading authority on executive and organizational development, calls this a leader's teachable point of view.

Tichy, a business consultant, educator, and author who was formerly Jack Welch's Manager of Management at General Electric, believes that developing and rolling out a teachable point of view in an organization includes several key factors:

1. Personal Involvement

Leaders with proven track records of success take direct responsibility for the development of other leaders. Because winning leaders invest a considerable amount of time in developing other leaders, they have well defined methodologies and thoroughly developed coaching and teaching techniques. Among these is a willingness to make mistakes and show appropriate vulnerability in order to serve as effective role models for others.

2. A Teachable Point of View

Leaders who develop other leaders have teachable points of view in the specific areas of ideas, values, emotional energy, and edge. Leaders and teachers have ideas that they can articulate and teach to others about how to make the organization successful in the marketplace -- and how to develop other leaders. Let's investigate these components further.

Ideas - A central Business Theory

Leaders have a strategy or "central business theory" and they have ideas about how to carry out that strategy. A company's central business theory explains why it is in business and how it is going to make money. If a company is going to win in a competitive environment, everyone in the organization must know what they are aiming to achieve.

Because circumstances are changing, a business idea that was good yesterday may not be so good today. This is particularly relevant to today's quickly changing business world. When such changes are seen on the horizon, effective leaders change their ideas, and then get everyone in the company working to achieve the new idea.

Some leaders excel at coming up with ideas. You don't have to be an "idea person" to be a good leader. "Lew Platt, the head of Hewlett-Packard, would not describe himself as an idea person," says Tichy. "He is good at recognizing good ideas, however, so he surrounds himself with people who come up with good ideas. Then he picks the best one."



Values - Speaking with Words and Actions

There's an old saying that people talk about having good values so they won't have to live by them. Unfortunately, events in our national political scene have given credibility to this saying. But for leaders and their companies, that's not the case. Today's leaders are finding that they and their people must behave differently. When you can't control, dictate, or monitor the behavior of employees, the only thing you can do is model and trust. This means that you have to let people make their own decisions. And you have to have a common set of values to make sure that those decisions are ones that will move the company ahead - and ones that will make you proud.

Clear ideas help people act quickly and independently by giving them a shared vision of what they are trying to accomplish. Values provide a similar shared understanding of "how" the idea will be achieved. How do people work together; how open are people to feedback from customers and each other; how much does a company value experimentation versus stability; how does it weigh the value of teamwork against individual initiative?

There are some big values, like honesty, integrity, and the sanctity of an agreement, that never

change. But others can and should change to support changing business theory. For example, the values of stability and respect for authority support a centrally controlled, industrial company. Conversely, the values of speed and self-confidence support a rapidly changing, decentralized company.

When a company has clear ideas and values,

people can figure out what to do without having to ask for much guidance. It is the role of the leader to ensure that a company's values support its central business idea and are communicated clearly.

Emotional Energy - Making it Happen

Good leaders pay attention to creating positive energy the same way they pay attention to spreading ideas and teaching values. That's because they know that positive energy helps people overcome obstacles and rise to new challenges. They also know that a leader is never energy neutral." You're either giving people energy or you are sapping it from them.

The best way leaders create positive energy in others is by exhibiting positive energy themselves. They work hard, with the determination that shows they really care about the organization.

Leaders engage other people to join them by making them see that their contributions can make a difference. Winning leaders do this in a number of ways, including coaching people, advising them, and listening to their input. They also show respect for others by not wasting their time with meetings that ramble on and don't produce results.

Edge - Making the Tough Decisions

Leaders who have edge have an unflinching readiness to face reality and the courage to act. Edge decisions may not be pleasant or popular in the short term. But a great leader has the willingness to do things that will make the organization better, even though they may be scary or painful. They are unwilling to let the difficulty of the decision cloud what they know is the right thing to do.

Great leaders have edge in most of their decisions. They make tough decisions about how to invest time, money, and resources. Leaders also make tough decisions about people. Edge requires giving honest feedback to help them improve. And it means confronting people who perform well but are abusive to others.

As unpleasant as these decisions can be, people want leaders to be decisive. Leaders can win others over by acting with compassion, teaching them why they reached their decisions, and helping them develop their own edge.

According to Tichy, the best way to teach edge is to put people in progressively more difficult situations where they have to make decisions, and then to give them feedback and support. Good leaders view mistakes as coaching opportunities rather than causes for punishment.

3. Stories that Communicate

Leadership is autobiographical. Leaders embody their teachable points of view in living stories. They tell stories about their pasts that explain their learning experiences and their beliefs. It is about



bringing who you are to the work of the organization.

Leaders also create stories about the future of their organizations to engage others both emotionally and intellectually and to attain the winning future that they desire. Based on these stories, people at all levels take actions to transform their organizations. Leaders' stories communicate their case for change, their idea of where the company is going and their perspective on how it will get there.

Some leaders seem to create stories that grab people instinctively. Others have to work at it. Regardless, stories bring alive the intellectual concepts of teaching, learning, ideas, values, energy, and edge. Stories are a powerful tool.

Getting the Point

The point is clear: to successfully lead organizations in today's turbulent business world, women and men must develop a teachable point of view that develops leaders throughout their organizations. Becoming a leader with an effective point of view is not beyond anyone's abilities (although it may currently be beyond his or her priorities). Just

as everyone can improve their athletic skills through practice, leadership skills can be improved and developed. As Peter Drucker said, "Leadership is a matter of behavior and practice and not of gift or charisma; it is responsibility."

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