

STRATEGIC ACCELERATION

CORE PRINCIPLES AND CONCEPTS

THE SPEED OF LIFE

The speed of life is a global condition that presents a strategic challenge for those who lead and manage organizations. The speed of life combines excessive amounts of unrefined information with a glut of choices and opportunities and presents itself in the form of confusion and distraction! How well leaders function within this constant condition determines value, competitive advantage and the ability to create results that will convert a vision or a dream into reality.

The speed of life can't be stopped but it can be understood and leveraged in a positive way. It is a fact that knowledge and information have always been a cornerstone of power, influence and achievement! However, the speed of life generates so much information it creates distractions that unwittingly lead people into well-intentioned *busyness*. *It is a form of busyness that marginalizes results.* The solution is to identify and deploy high-leverage activities that harness the right information at the right time and focus on actions that will move the results needle! *Strategic Acceleration* combines a method of strategic thought with a practical process that consistently produces superior results, faster.

The challenges of contending with a global economy and the complexity of all the forces that influence economic well-being demand flexible, effective leadership responses. Leaders must be able to guide their organizations through periodic times of unforeseen stress that are and will continue to be inevitable.

The only certain thing about the speed of life is uncertainty. It is impossible to accurately forecast future conditions over a long period of time, so that a leadership approach based on the principle of *"going as far as you can see – so that you can then see farther"* is needed. Such a strategy is created by concentrating on the **three strategic issues that matter most: Clarity, Focus, and Execution.**

CLARITY

If there is no cohesive vision among leaders there is little chance of achieving sustained organizational success and superior results. Most organizations have adopted vision and mission statements; however, many within those organizations find it difficult to articulate the vision or mission, without reading it. This condition is typical and may be evidence that leadership does not have clarity about what it really wants and how to achieve it. Unless there is clarity regarding a vision – there is no vision!

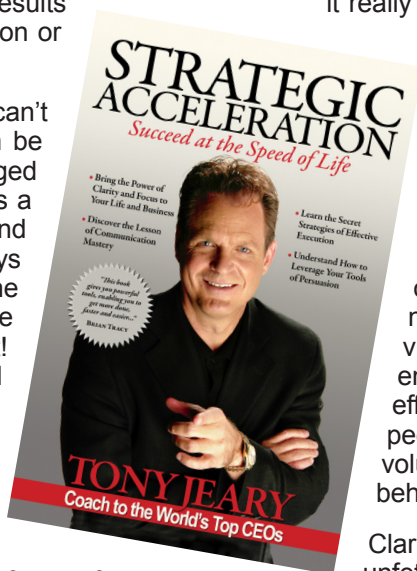
When leaders have clarity concerning their vision it lives! It also creates zeal and passion for the commitment and determination needed to execute the vision. A powerful effect of clarity is that it creates positive perceptions of leadership's vision and negates the need to *push* others toward it. The vision itself becomes able to pull the entire organization forward. The pulling effect is created because clarity impacts people at the level of belief and produces voluntary change in their attitude and behavior.

Clarity is achieved when leaders have an unfettered view of their vision and are united in understanding what they really want, why they want it, the value of doing it and the highest purpose for doing it! The purpose of a vision is understood when its importance to all is clearly and simply stated. Value is found in the felt needs that the vision will touch and fill.

FOCUS

Focus is the opposite of distraction! Organizational success hinges on the ability to cut through the clutter created by the speed of life and focus on the high-leverage activities that directly impact results. Focus is not something that comes naturally for most people, and that is why it is a skill that must be learned, polished, and practiced. Specifically, focus is a thinking skill that is acquired as a result of mental discipline.

Focus is rarely treated as a strategic skill, and most people haven't really spent much time factually examining how well they focus. For this reason, focus does not get the respect it deserves and is usually treated as a 'time-management' issue, which minimizes its true importance. The heart of the focus issue is distraction and distraction is a natural



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continued . . .

occurrence in every person's life. Even the most organized people with the greatest time management systems can be routinely distracted.

Because the human mind serves as a connector of facts and Information, fresh input is the raw material of creativity, opportunity recognition and problem solving. The mind is always hungry for new information because it stimulates thought and is fulfilling. Unfortunately, the basic process of thinking provides the opportunity for distraction. Distraction is always the path of least resistance and the most natural activity for the mind to embrace. The speed of life offers up scores of opportunities each day that lure us into distractions that gobble time.

Evaluating the ability of an organization to focus is a matter of measuring how well predetermined objectives are completed on time. Being late for meetings, missing telephone appointments and completing projects behind schedule are indications of an organization's inability to focus. To defeat distraction a clear view of current conditions must be understood in relationship to the vision leaders hope to execute. Between today's conditions and tomorrow's hope is a gap that must be crossed. In that gap is every goal, objective and action step that must be taken to be successful. Achieving focus is a matter of identifying the high-leverage activities in the gap that powerfully impact results and developing the mental skills to ensure they receive the time they deserve.

EXECUTION

Executing a vision and creating superior results faster requires persuading others to take action that exceeds normal expectations in a positive way. Unless expectations are exceeded, the results of yesterday will continue to be the results of tomorrow. Because it is impossible to force people to exceed expectations, it means they must do so voluntarily. They must become willing to make voluntary changes in their behavior and it is the responsibility of leadership to persuade them to do so.

The ability to persuade and motivate others has a direct impact on achieving superior results, faster. As organizations gain clarity and develop focusing skills, the need to concentrate on high-leverage activities becomes paramount. However, identifying and focusing on those activities is only the beginning. Once an

organization's high-leverage activities are known, the challenge of actually doing them becomes the issue. People must be persuaded to focus on these activities and to act quickly! This always involves exceeding expectations.

There is more to exceeding expectations than adopting the idea as a business strategy. Exceeding expectations has its greatest impact when it is adopted by individuals as a way of life. When you have a group of people who are willing to exceed expectations in the normal course of their daily activity a powerful force for superior results is created.

People are persuaded to exceed expectations based on the positive strategic presence of the leadership team. Leaders create images of influence in the minds of those they lead and those images define the organizational perception of leadership. It is this overall persona that creates Strategic Presence. Leaders are constantly creating positive and negative Strategic Presence based on their values and their behavior. The most important fact about Strategic Presence is that it produces two possible reactions in others. It either produces voluntary cooperation or it produces various forms of resistance. If the Strategic Presence of leadership is highly positive, people will be more likely to support the vision of leadership. If the Strategic Presence of leadership is negative, people will not be willing to exceed expectations. They may actually try to undermine the goals of leadership!

The key to persuasion is Strategic Presence and the ability to communicate strategically is the foundation for both. Organizations frequently treat communication as a collection of skills, or just another training or coaching objective. This idea represents a tactical approach to communication. If execution can be seen as a train rolling down a track to a predetermined destination, communication is the engine that powers the train!

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