
Strategic Clarity

by Tony Jeary



Today's marketplace is tough. It's competitive, faster than ever and the stakes are high. In today's ultracompetitive world, getting superior results faster is absolutely critical to success! So many want it! However, this hectic speed of life makes it easy to become sidetracked by things that steal priorities and make leaders less effective. People are hungry for ways to get ahead, to win and to accelerate results, both personally and professionally.

Let's face it: Leadership is a results contest. Executives are valued for the results they bring to the table, and only the top few win and excel. Leaders understand that success is likely to become a moving target and that their organizations must become faster, leaner and better equipped to compete and change quickly.

The speed of life is a global condition that presents a strategic challenge for those who lead and manage organizations. It 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 results that 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. Knowledge and information have always been the cornerstones of power, influence and achievement! However, the speed of life generates so much information that it creates distractions, unwittingly leading people into well-intentioned busyness. It is a form of busyness that marginalizes results. The solution is to identify and deploy High-Leverage Activities (HLAs) that harness the right information at the right time and focus on actions that will move the results needle!

I have worked with top executives all over the world and personally coached the CEOs of some of the world's largest companies. Our organization has studied the success puzzle and what it takes to win. In the process, we have developed a best-practice methodology that addresses this dead center. The methodology centers on strategic clarity, which is the missing piece to the success puzzle in many organizations. It defines those who win on a consistent basis. Leaders with strategic clarity have a clear vision. They understand where their organizations are today and where they want them to go. They document the steps to get there and communicate that plan to their team. Leaders who want to win take strategic clarity to heart.

It is important to help people understand that in today's global business climate, growth and success are determined by two organizational needs. The first is the need for speed; the second is the need for results. Speed is the strategic engine needed to compete and win in a rapidly changing marketplace. Results determine the ability of leadership to execute and sustain a vision in the marketplace.

Embracing speed as a strategic asset requires higher levels of strategic clarity about the vision of the organization. If you have no cohesive vision, there is little chance of achieving sustained success in our unusual economy.

Strategic clarity is achieved when we have an unfettered view of our vision and understand what we really want, why we want it, the value of doing it and the highest purpose for doing it! When businesses have strategic clarity concerning their vision, it lives! It also creates zeal and passion for the commitment and determination needed to execute the vision. The vision itself becomes able to pull everyone forward. The pulling effect is created because clarity impacts people at the level of belief and produces voluntary change in attitudes and behavior.

Ask yourself: Do I have strategic clarity? Is my vision clear and documented? Does my top leadership truly understand it? Am I clearly cascading it to my whole organization?

The word cascade has a lot to do with results. Think about this: Most organizations have adopted vision and mission statements of some kind; 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 there is no real clarity about the vision and how to achieve it. Unless there is strategic clarity regarding a vision, there is really no vision!

Winning organizations effectively communicate the vision, priorities and objectives—down to all levels. And winning organizations are made up of teams that understand the “why” behind the vision. They see how all the pieces fit together, which allows each person to more effectively do his or her part.

There is a powerful connection between how well leaders execute their vision and how successful they are at inspiring others. Their ability to persuade others has a direct impact on being able to get superior results faster. Identifying and focusing on the HLAs that have the best chance to significantly move the results needle is only the beginning. The challenge of actually doing those HLAs inevitably involves not only persuading others to help, but to do so by exceeding expectations. And people are usually only willing to exceed expectations when they have achieved strategic clarity about the “why” behind those expectations. Strategic clarity produces voluntary change and cooperation and reduces resistance.

Do you have strategic clarity? In today’s market, thinking you have strategic clarity is not good enough. You have to know.

To get a clear assessment of where you stand, rate yourself on the distinctions shown here, giving yourself one point for each yes.

1. My team clearly understands our future opportunities.
2. My brand identity is thoroughly documented and shared throughout my organization.
3. I am very educated on market trends and my competition.
4. My team skillfully deploys each tool in our marketing arsenal.
5. My business objectives are clearly documented and cascaded to all.
6. I define and effectively communicate priorities to my organization on an ongoing basis.

7. I understand the concept of High-Leverage Activities and use my energy wisely.
8. I constantly look for areas of organizational improvement.
9. My vision is documented and presented impactfully to all levels.
10. My team/organization knows exactly what to do to make the vision successful.

How did you do? If you did not rate at least an 8 or 9, you need to work on your level of strategic clarity.

You want results! So, step back and build your plan. Write down what you really want (your vision), define your HLAs, and effectively share your vision and objectives with your entire organization.



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