

Do You Have What It Takes?
3 RESPONSIBILITIES OF STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP –

By Paul Plotczyk
Director, Growth Strategy Partners LLC

Strategic Leadership

The traditional view of leaders as authoritarian, “take-charge” directors – the source of wisdom, truth and decision making for their organizations – no longer works. Organizations and the problems facing them are too complex for one person, or a small group of executives, to do it all.

The performance of an organization is the result of *multiple variables in a complex equation*. And, the leadership factor is usually the most powerful ingredient in the formula. The new business model requires leaders who truly involve others, and see the value of creating an expanded and broad-based leadership team.

We believe that at its core, the requirements of leadership today are very straightforward.

Strategic leaders have 3 key responsibilities that are essential in creating a team that is prepared to manage the complexity and change inherent in today's business environment.

3 Key Responsibilities of Strategic Leadership

1. Take Responsibility for Vision, Alignment and Deployment
2. Create a Culture of Empowerment
3. Build Commitment

Let's look into each of them in more detail.

1. Take Responsibility for Vision, Alignment and Deployment

Vision – Where Are We Going?

Setting the vision may be the single most important responsibility of leaders.

Advocating/articulating a point of view – a future to live into!

It enables strategic leaders to set the principals that provide the direction and broad boundaries for the enterprise. It provides the foundation that makes it possible to empower individuals to act with independence, judgment and initiative – *because they know where they are headed!*

The Challenge: Vision must be both broad and specific – broad enough to capture the hopes, dreams, and desires of a knowledge-based work force, and specific enough so that individuals can define the scope of their own work in the fulfillment of the vision.

Alignment – Is Everyone on the Same Bus? NOT in lock-step!

Through conversation, the alignment process builds commitment to the vision and the strategic plan. The leadership team aligns the entire organization so that all the organization's energy and action are focused on achieving several core goals.

Strategic Leaders achieve alignment by:

1. **Sharing a clearly articulated vision with the entire organization.** Often not an easy task – crafting vision may be through the barriers blocking success! Become convinced that the most powerful way for leaders to realign org is to confront unvarnished truth

about barriers blocking strategy implementation. An aligned organizational vision, accompanied by the business practices that operationalize the vision, has the ability to deliver the widespread motivation for **urgency and execution** (*action*).

2. **Crafting specific goals that guide the organization's work.** Then embrace 'steady-state' requirements as well as continuous improvement, new initiatives and customer focus.
3. **Communicating to and involving all levels of the organization.** Conversation moves back & forth between advocacy & inquiry. Leaders job is to articulate a point of view, then respond to and ask questions. Find out what people think – DON'T Get blindsided later!

Deployment – Do We Have the Right Resources? (*Are we capable of achieving the vision?*)

Leaders deploy the appropriate resources at the time and place where they can have the most impact. The leadership team makes/*articulates* the strategic decisions:

- Which markets?
- Which products?
- Which initiatives?

Then they allocate resources and empower those employees closest to the marketplace to implement the strategy and meet customer needs.

2. Create a Culture of Empowerment

People are often confused about the meaning of empowerment. Traditionally, "*power*" has meant the ability to impose a position on others or on circumstances. So when individuals or teams are told they'll be "empowered" they often respond with questions like:

- What is our spending authority?
- How much budget do we control?
- Now can we tell others what to do?

That's not empowerment; that's delegation of formal authority.

Empowerment in today's business environment means the ability to influence others and the way business is conducted. It is **not** simply about the formal hierarchy, authority or control.

People begin to feel empowered only when they are clear about their responsibilities, when they are held accountable for fulfilling these responsibilities, and when they have the authority and the resources they need to do so. Then they understand that they can, in fact, *influence* the way the organization conducts business.

At the center of successful change are the sharing of power; the opening up the power reserves and asking everyone to take what they need to get the job done. *Empowerment is about transmitting power to the proper owners.*

3. Develop Commitment

Strategic Leaders engage employees and help them develop a personal commitment to the organization's common vision and goals. Commitment is built through communication and participation. When built through involvement, this commitment results in:

- Enlarge vision and understanding
- Clarify purpose in activities
- Bring behavior into line with values, goals and strategies
- Bring about changes that are self-generating, permanent and momentum building.

Now You Have It!

By focusing on these 3 core responsibilities of strategic leadership you will create an organization that is **ready, willing and able** to take on the vast and varied challenges that your organization faces every day.

You will also create an environment that **attracts, develops and retains** the best and brightest, giving your organization additional competitive advantage.

I hope you are now thinking that the leadership requirements of a winning organization that stand the test of time go well beyond the “chief” in the corner office. In a complex enterprise, success extends to the expanded leadership team, as well as to the systems, structures and procedures they put in place. It is this broad leadership and the organizational systems of an enterprise that are important over time, especially in an uncertain marketplace.

In closing, we have been talking about the choices that every strategic leader has to be sure to articulate: 1. Where to Play- target markets, customers and 2. How to Win – what is the compelling value proposition you want to make sure everyone delivers on?

Growth Strategy Partners LLC is a management consulting firm which accelerates the revenue, profit and organizational performance of privately held businesses by implementing its research based 7 Keys to Growth.

To learn more visit www.GrowthStrategyPartners.com or call Paul Plotczyk at 781-343-4005.