

Effective Leadership in the 21st Century

by Lisa Kanda

What does it take to be a leader? A much easier way to look at this is to look for examples of poor leadership. Look at areas that are easily recognizable in your own work and professional environments that clearly demonstrate that leadership is malfunctioning.

Are any of these statements familiar?

- Excessive meetings where nothing gets accomplished
- Preponderance of consensus driven decision making
- Lack of personal accountability
- Communication problems
- Difficulty terminating poor performers
- Personality conflicts/power struggles
- Difficulty keeping employees motivated
- “Can’t do” attitudes
- Duplication of effort

If you have experienced or are experiencing any of the above, then leadership is not working. Just because someone has the title doesn’t make them a good leader. One of the single biggest reasons why leaders fail to lead is the absence of effective development processes that allow them to lead!

The place to start is by changing the way leadership is defined. It’s time to break free of old paradigms that may cause limited thinking, much like “the world is flat,” and “no one can break the 4-minute mile,” that are used to limit us. Determining that a leader must possess a certain set of personal attributes such as courage, honesty, integrity, is limited thinking.

The new paradigm for the 21st century defines leadership as the ability to set goals and achieve desired results.

It Begins with Strategic Planning

Leaders achieve results by setting goals through strategic planning that is focused on vision. This first step is to create alignment between the goals of the individual workers and the overall vision of the company. When that happens, positive results are more likely to occur.

It continues by aligning the people and the processes to ensure its realization. The goal is to have all of your operations linked to the plan. Then virtually everything that happens in a company works purposefully toward achieving that plan.

“Leadership is the most important single factor in determining business success or failure in our competitive, turbulent, fast moving economy.”

- Brian Tracy

What is Your Vision?

What’s your company’s vision? If you would ask your receptionist, a loading dock worker, a bookkeeper, would they give the same answer?

Did you know that 60-70% of employees do not know their company’s vision, let alone how to align their work efforts with it?

What are Your Core Values?

Your company’s core values should be visited by the leadership team immediately after drafting the organization’s vision statement. What are the unswerving values to which we hold ourselves accountable? Those values are the guiding principles that drive all other actions and behaviors in your company.

Are People Committed to the Plan?

One of the biggest challenges prevalent in most organizations poses another question: Are people committed to the plan? Organizations must work toward getting all of their people pulling in the same direction.

Every employee must:

- Understand how their action steps work to accomplish the vision.
- Be supported with the required resources.
- Have processes in place that ensure productivity, innovation, and speed.

Then and only then is the organization aligned and is truly in a position to succeed. The bottom line is that you need committed people to work the plan in order for it to be realized.

The Steps to Effective Leadership

Leaders achieve results when they implement steps to create a strategic plan that encompasses the following steps:

1. Establish a Vision Statement – who or where you want your company to be in the future (about 3 years).
2. Establish a Mission Statement – what must be done in year one to move to achieve the vision.
3. Create Critical Success Factors – four to eight items that are necessary and sufficient to achieve the mission.
4. Establish Goals – must be necessary and sufficient to accomplish the critical success factors.
5. Offer a Specific Action Plan to Accomplish the Goals – who does what by when.

For more information about correcting the leadership challenges in your workplace, email lisa@elkayadvisors.com and ask about having a seminar in your organization about Fail-Safe Leadership.



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Elkay Corporate Advisors specializes in leading, coaching, consulting and training businesses and individuals to help them be more effective and profitable. We use customized processes and practical guidance to help clients make strategic and informed decisions to achieve success faster and easier than they could on their own.

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