

I N S I D E   T H E   M I N D S

# Organization Development Strategies

*Leading HR Executives on Creating an Effective  
Framework to Drive Transformation and  
Maximize Business Results*



ASPATORE

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Preserving the Core and  
Stimulating Progress: The Art  
of Leading Organizational  
Change

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## Introduction

I am the Vice President of Organizational Development for The Cooper Companies, Inc. I serve in the role on a part-time basis in addition to running an international HR/management consulting organization and teaching as a college graduate level business professor in four universities over the last twenty-five years. I report directly to the chief executive officer of the Cooper Companies, Inc., Mr. Robert Weiss, who steadfastly believes that people remain our number-one asset here at Cooper. I also support the EVP of The Cooper Companies, Carol Kaufman. Carol oversees many functions, including HR directly at the holding company level and indirectly at the business unit level. Carol and I work in a seamless alignment to ensure the HR and OD imperatives are achieved in tandem consistent with the vision of the CEO and our long-range strategic business plan. The mission of organizational development at The Cooper Companies is:

*Create a culture of leadership, personal responsibility and human capital excellence recognizing our #1 asset is our people. As a quality of life company, Organizational Development is focused on improving both personal and organizational effectiveness while delivering on performance expectations to the CEO and our shareholders.*

## Defining Organizational Development

Organizational Development (OD) is a powerful organizational change management process. Done correctly, it engages the minds and hearts of your human resources by providing a vision of the future, participative involvement, and shared ownership while allowing you to take an organization to the next level of sustained excellence. Whatever the business strategy, one fact will always remain in organizational leadership: *the only constant is change and you either grow or die!* Successful leaders anticipate change and never cease worrying about the future—even in times of prosperity! I tend to live by the OD maxim: *“the art of progress is to preserve order amid change and preserve change amid order.”* Leaders should appreciate the adaptive nature of organizational life and accept natural evolution in their businesses processes while focusing on three things:

1. The right organizational strategy
2. The right leadership team
3. The right people to next navigate through change

Leaders listen to signals in their organization and invite feedback in an open, honest, and authentic culture. Leaders leave their ego at the door and remain willing to hear tough information. They may be a bit obsessive on constantly improving organizational development to keep that competitive edge and grow share. In my PhD studies I recall my advisor sharing this quote by Eric Hoffer, which seems to be so relevant to the power of OD: “The central task of education is to implant a will and a facility for learning; it should produce not learned but learning people. The truly human society is a learning society...in times of drastic change is the learners who inherit the future. The learned usually find themselves equipped to live in a world that no longer exists.” In my thirty years of HR/OD I could not agree more with Mr. Hoffer’s conclusion. Organizations who live by this credo will consistently flourish.

## **Fundamentals of Organizational Development**

Organizational Development (OD) was conceptualized in the late 1950s by the founding father Kurt Lewin from MIT. Lewin came up with the idea of group dynamics, action research, and the concept of providing a collaborative consultant/client relationship to lead change in an organization. Dr. Warren Bennis, a professor at University of Southern California, provided a framework definition in my early education that serves as my guidepost:

*A response to change, a complex educational strategy intended to change the beliefs, attitude, values, and structure of an organization so it can better adapt to new technologies, markets, challenges, and the dizzying array of change itself. OD is neither “anything done to an organization” nor is it “the training function of an organization”; rather, it is a particular kind of change process designed to bring about a desired end result.<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> French, Wendell L., and Bell, Cecil. *Organization Development: Behavioral Science Interventions for Organization Improvement*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1998.

From my lens, I view OD as an organization-wide effort to increase an organization's effectiveness and viability applying the principles of the transformational leadership model in leading an organization. The enlightened organization in my view accepts the proposition that a transformational leader is concerned with the following commitment:

*A process for changing and transforming people and culture. It is concerned with emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long term goals and includes assessing a follower's motives and needs. It is a form of socialized leadership that is concerned with the collective good, transcending one's own interests for the sake of others.<sup>2</sup>*

### *Organizational Development Mission Statement*

When I joined The Cooper Companies, I met with my key customers and valued stakeholders. As a holding company, respecting the role of decentralization, I viewed our business as my customers. I therefore embraced the role as a servant leader, change agent, trusted advisor, and a business partner committed to achieving the long-range strategic plan of The Cooper Companies. At the macro level it is my belief that OD can enhance revenue growth, improve profitability, engage the human capital, create a culture innovation, foster customer excellence, and ultimately maximize shareholder wealth by focusing on both business and talent leadership issues. One of my imperatives for Cooper is to ensure we have a strong pipeline of leaders that will drive business growth and organizational perpetuity.

Our OD vision at Cooper, supported in spirit and intent by senior management, falls into the following categories, not only here at Cooper, but also within other client sectors that I represent:

- Developing the next generation of leaders
- Building the brand as a quality of life company through innovative talent management techniques, e.g., Our Global Employee Wellness Program

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<sup>2</sup> Bass, B.M., and Avolio, B.J. "The Implications of Transactional and Transformational Leadership for Individual, Team and Organizational Development." *Research in Organizational Change and Development*. 4 (1990): 231-272.

- Promoting a culture of trust, open communications, pride, credibility, respect and fairness (all tenets found in a truly Great Workplace)
- Providing employees with an opportunity to develop their skills, talents and finding a successful career path in the company
- Creating a learning organization by perpetuating a culture of mentoring and coaching at all levels
- Providing employees with recognition based on job performance and achievements
- Developing a human capital mindset in all managers of the organization that views employees as truly our number-one asset
- Creating a high-performance culture
- Remaining a highly inclusive global culture that appreciates diverse perspectives
- Being committed to corporate social responsibility and sustainability

### *Working with the C-Suite*

I meet with each C-level executive on quarterly basis to determine what support I can provide in developing their leadership pipeline and supporting their strategic HR initiatives. I will also provide support for any change management initiatives or guidance on process improvements consistent with the long-range strategic plan of the company. I view my colleagues in the C-suite as my customers. It is important that I add value in meaningful, tailored and effectively implemented service level agreements from the OD team.

### *Important HR Skills*

HR, adopting a “talent leadership” and “strategic business” mindset, plays a significant role in creating an effective framework for leading a successful OD effort.

First, it is important for an HR professional to seek professional certification and truly understand the eight core business process areas of HR. Having a strong working knowledge of business management, strategy, workforce planning, employment, HR development, compensation, benefits, employee/labor relations, and risk management are core knowledge areas for successful HR professionals. I embraced the

certification process twenty-five years ago, obtained my Senior Professional in HR certification, Certified Compensation Professional Designation, and even started teaching the certification course at UC Berkeley. When you compare what certification offers based on recent studies done by the Society for Human Resources Management the evidence is clear and compelling in terms of what most CEOs seek from their senior HR/OD leaders. Most enlightened CEOs want a business partner that understands strategic business management techniques, talent relationship management, and organizational development. CEOs want an HR/OD person that understands workforce planning, succession planning, and how the organizational can source the best talent possible at the least possible cost.

Second, specific training offered for those involved in OD-related planning includes taking courses in organizational development, organizational behavior, organizational psychology, and strategic management, reading literature on HR/OD best practices, and obtaining certification in psychological instrumentation and career assessment tools.

Third, lead with the heart and manage with the head. I loved this phrase when I heard it from a professorial colleague years back. HR people are sometime referred to as “the no factory, touchy feely and viewed as obstacles.” Sadly, HR people have earned this reputation by not connecting the value of HR with the business process that a balanced HR/OD professional can offer. It means that HR professionals need to understand the “business of business” and embrace a deeper understanding of finance, cost accounting, quantitative business methods, strategic management, and other core business process areas of an organization. True HR business partners know the organization’s language of business and can relate their processes to helping their customers achieve their business imperatives. Most important, HR professionals should lead with the heart by modeling the way and inspiring their human capital. It is important to create a culture where one can arrive to the job site each day and give their personal best with the talents they offer!

Fourth, in terms of key competencies, I would say that business acumen, organizational leadership, relationship management, and communication remain top of my list. I also think we will need to do a better job with

metrics, analytics, business indicators, and knowledge of the business from both an HR and OD perspective.

Finally, we must remember the importance of emotional intelligence, agility, and fortitude. At the core you must have a true passion for HR/OD. This is a people business and we deal with the positive and more difficult aspects of the human condition. Too many HR/OD types later in their careers let the 10 percent who cause you 90 percent of your problems infect the 80 percent who come in each day and truly give their personal best. Policies do not replace leadership when dealing with the tougher issues in performance management. The HR/OD profession can be very rewarding but it can also have its share of complex issues, conflicts, lawsuits, and difficult employee relations issues. It is easy to get cynical in HR, but one never must lose their heart and love for people. If you do, get a check up from the neck up, find the good MOJO and passion again, or get out. People need an HR/OD professional that exudes positive energy, passion, balance, objectivity, courage, true caring, and advocacy for their people.

### *Following Trends*

The resources that are most beneficial for staying abreast of research and trends are varied. Membership in the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) is a must at the international, national, and local level. Also, attending national conferences and local workshops is necessary to stay ahead of the learning curve for the profession. Active participation in American Society of Training and Development (ASTD) and local Organizational Development Networks is also a good idea to balance the OD side of the equation. You should also be a prolific reader of *Harvard Business Review*, *California Management Review*, Abstract.com and other best practice journals and publications on OD-related topics to your industry. Read the *Wall Street Journal* on daily basis. Become a Certified Compensation and Benefits professional in the World at Work, formerly American Compensation Association. Considering the current IRS regulations and the higher levels of scrutiny inherent in Sarbanes-Oxley, Dodd-Frank, and governance requirements related to total reward systems, staying abreast of changes in compensation benefits and total rewards is a must. Appreciate your number-one imperative is also risk management, so providing for safe and healthful environments for your employees should be a number-one imperative.

### *Role of Consultants*

It is very important to augment your OD mission with a cadre of proven advisors, consultants and executive coaches. I find it invaluable to provide our current and next-generation leaders with qualified external coaches, mentors, and other resources to assist in their continuing growth and development. From the CEO on down in the organization, executive coaches have proven to be one of our more effective OD resources in my time at The Cooper Companies, Inc. Fresh, external, relevant thinking with the best resources in industry is a win-win for all. I find executive coaching to be more effective at times versus spending thousands of dollars on expensive executive education programs. The value of mentor on the technical issues of a job is one side of the development. The other side is coaching where one is there to listen, guide, inspire, and motivate you on the journey. I find executive coaching and proper measurement of learning outcomes can achieve ten times ROI in less than six months if done correctly as leadership development exercise.

### *Maximizing Potential*

One of my mentors, Jerry Abbott, used this wonderful mathematical equation to describe the process of successful OD and leading change:  $U + A = C$ . He suggested that through (U) understanding plus (A) acceptance one would gain (C) commitment to change. This is why I believe in open, honest, and authentic communication with all staff. Employees need to see the vision, feel empowered to offer input, take ownership for ideas, experiment, feel a sense of worth, and receive the tools to be successful. Then, reward success, re-calibrate, and keep marching down the path of continuous process improvement in all you do.

### *Using Organizational Development Effectively*

OD can be used to effectively bring about large-scale cultural change. It can serve as a catalyst that will create a seamless, aligned, anchored approach to lasting, transparent employee engagement. It also catalyzes business process alignment to achieve the mission of the organization in the qualitative and quantitative sense. The best source that has guided me in my OD intervention is clearly Dr. John Kotter's thought leadership where he

outlined the deadly sins but also established eight critical criteria for success. I highly recommend that all HR/OD embrace this proven model.<sup>3</sup>

## Common OD Mistakes

The most common mistake HR professionals make when it comes to OD strategies is chasing too many goals, objectives, and outcomes in a limited time frame. When leading change, pursue three wins, celebrate success, recalibrate, and then go for another three wins. Do not try to solve all twenty-seven organizational problems at once—triage the important from the less important as it pertains to the strategic direction of the company. The halls of failure are replete with strategic plans and OD interventions that attempted to solve all the world's problems in ninety days or less, short of solving world peace in a thirty-five-page strategic plan. Keep your OD strategy simple, focused, measurable, and attainable given resource constraints of the organization. Another mistake is that they do not follow the Peter Drucker credo “what gets measured must get done.” HR professionals must show the value proposition of OD and how it can benefit the business process and mission of an organization. Our OD processes should truly add some form of fiscal value even in the public and not-for-profit sectors. This is where my training in finance and cost accounting has accelerated my career path in companies. In the simplest of measures, how can my OD process increase revenue, enhance operating income, grow market share, improve gross margins, reduce expenses and employee turnover, add economic value, increase productivity, and reduce cycle time? I believe everything in HR/OD can and should be measured and have the why associated with the activity and advancing the vision of the organization. I strive to partner with my finance team for personal mentoring to translate all I do into something meaningful for the organization and shareholders.

## Importance of Employees

Robert Weiss, our CEO, truly believes that employees are *the* most important asset in our organization, as I have noted in an earlier narrative. It is not lip service either to him. Mr. Weiss has a strong

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<sup>3</sup> Kotter, John P. “Why Transformation Efforts Fail.” *Harvard Business Review*. (March-April 1995): 64.

commitment to quality of life for his employees and the customers we serve. He places Organizational Development and Human Resources at a direct reporting relationship to his office. Mr. Weiss is very committed to leadership development, succession planning, wellness, and other imperatives as it pertains to best of practice in HR and OD. What is special about The Cooper Companies is how passionate Robert Weiss, Carol Kaufman, our EVP, and the senior leadership teams are in terms of caring about their employees. Our success manifests itself in the numerous awards we have won including: One of the Top Workplaces in the San Francisco Bay Area for 2010, 2011, 2012, and 2013; Best Place to Work in 2012; Best Companies for Developing Leaders, *The CEO Magazine*, 2010 and 2012; Fit Friendly Awards from the American Heart Association, 2011 and 2012, among other noteworthy achievements in our business units. Cooper enjoys low turnover, high job satisfaction, a committed workforce, and solid human capital leadership across 7,000 employees worldwide.

### **Conclusion: The Years Ahead**

As I look across this company, as well as my client base at this time across the public, private, and not-for-profit sectors, I believe that OD can play a significant role in the next five to fifteen years in the following areas:

- Retaining, rewarding, and developing employees.
- Developing the next generation of leaders (succession planning).
- Creating a corporate culture—that is, a brand as a truly great workplace that attracts, retains, and provides a successful quality of life for all employees. Successful employees breed the passion for authentic world class customer service.
- Finding quality employees to meet the demands of new products and specialized skills in the right places and the right markets throughout the world.
- Ensuring we have effective and efficient HR systems and processes that produce appropriate outcomes and cost effectiveness.
- Creating an HR organization that is service-driven, employee-centric, and viewed as a trusted advisor and business partner.

## Key Takeaways

- If you accept the proposition that transformational leadership is the imperative as we enter into the twenty-first century then your co-captain is clearly the OD process.
- In the HR field, it is essential to be constantly learning. Leaders must keep up with changing economic conditions and regulations, as well as new ideas in the field.
- Focus on a few projects at a time and move one once you have achieved success; do not try to solve every problem at once.
- While human resources is a challenging and technical field, it is important to remember the human component. Lead from the heart and manage from the head.

*Larry Bienati held senior level positions at Safeway Stores, Longs Drug Stores, and The Cooper Companies, Inc. He was a senior leader and principal owner in the Kleinfelder Group of Companies, an international geotechnical, environmental, and management consulting firm, during his time there. Dr. Bienati holds a BS degree in HR/labor relations, MBA in strategic management, and a PhD in business administration. His dissertation offers original research in the rehabilitation of problem employees and organizational turnaround strategies.*

*For the last twenty-five years Dr. Bienati has taught at Saint Mary's College, U.C. Berkeley's Worldwide Business Programs, California Maritime Academy, and Sacramento State University, serving as faculty lead for many executive leadership development programs and the EMBA program. Dr. Bienati is a respected professional speaker, consultant, author, and practitioner in the areas of human resource strategy, complex employee relations, executive compensation, strategic planning, succession planning, ownership transitions, merger integrations, and Board Governance alignment.*

*Dr. Bienati has consulted for over 200 respected domestic and international organizations in addition to significant public sector experience at the federal, state, county, and local agencies in areas of strategy, succession, and OD interventions. He is the volunteer board president for the Sierra State Parks Foundation, Lake Tahoe, and serves on various boards and advisory groups. Dr. Bienati brings a rich diversity of experience, passion, practicality, and inspiring engagement with his seminars, keynotes, clients, and MBA*

*students. He donates 10 percent of his practice each year assisting nonprofit organizations and public sector clients in promoting their social missions and was recently recognized as volunteer of the year.*

***Dedication:*** *I dedicate this chapter to those wonderful leaders in the world who understand that one can achieve profit through people by truly caring about your employees as people, creating a shared vision, and allowing each employee to bring their personal best to work each day toward the achievement of a noble goal to serve the world in which we live. Thanks to my business mentors, Fred Jackson and Jerry Abbott, who taught me the best of HR and OD. To my true life mentors, my parents and my partner in life, Cathy, I will continue to live by the credo, “the heart that gives, gathers.” I truly have had a most wonderful life and career in HR/OD!*

## **Exhibit A**

### **Business Plan Outcomes Used to Measure HR/OD Success**

*Larry Bienati, PhD*

- Developing the next generation of leaders (clear succession charts)
- Building the brand as a quality of life company through innovative talent management techniques (retention, awards, happy, productive employees)
- Promoting a culture of trust, open communication, engagement, respect, and fairness (Great workplace measure done annually)
- Employee and Management development: Providing employees with an opportunity to employ their skills and talents in formal coaching and mentoring plans
- Creating a learning organization with a culture of mentoring and coaching at all levels
- Creating a stimulating and attractive organizational culture
- Providing employees with recognition based on job performance
- Developing a human capital mindset in all managers of the organization
- Creating a high performance culture
- Remaining highly inclusive culture that appreciates diverse perspectives
- Being committed to corporate social responsibility and sustainability

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## Exhibit B

### Seven Strategies for Launching a Successful OD/Change Leadership Effort

*Larry Bienati, PhD*

1. *Pure intentions, bone honest communication on the “why of change” must be shared, supported and modeled by senior leadership.* Lack of unified, aligned motives on the part of senior leadership destroy trust, affect credibility and impact employee engagement, leading to silos and organizational chaos. It starts with senior leadership being on the same bus! Senior leaders should have a voice, constructive conversation allowed and “challenging the process” encouraged. Once a decision is made, the team needs to speak in a unified voice, walk the talk, have each other’s backs and model the way. Senior managers who cannot philosophically accept the need for change, need to be realigned as appropriate and external entrants may be necessary to achieve the outcome. Engage the cynics with empathy, awareness, involvement and understanding but remember at some point if members of management cannot “share the vision” then tough calls must be made.
2. *Alliances and political issues must be understood, influenced and engaged.* The halls of transition are replete with successful leaders who failed to connect the dots with the politics of the situation. Appreciate key alliances ensure the right stakeholders understand, accept and commit to the change and the benefits it will offer to them and the organization.
3. *A compelling need must be established for why the organization must change and the impacts of not adapting.* A scenario of the future should be created to drive the urgency of change. Preserve the core of the culture when you can, yet driving the need to stimulate progress for organizational perpetuity. *So, get your hips moving with your lips!* It is important to engage the troops face-to-face in authentic conversation. Some team members may be cynical about yet another management fad of the month, broken promises of the past and the impacts the change will be bring personally, professionally and financially. Appreciate that a “cynic” may

actually be a once passionate individual that does not want to be disappointed again so walk in their moccasins first. Listen, appreciate anxieties, and empathize with concerns affecting them. It is about TRUST and “deeds versus words” in gaining eventual buy-in. Tell the truth, tell the story and provide a level of confidence and the roles everyone plays in total success. Be authentic, manage discovery”, listen, reflect, acknowledge constructive ideas and make their opinions count. Remember the #1 issue on their minds is retaliation for challenging the process—drive out fear, reward courage!

4. *Create Effective Process Improvement Teams.* Remember, leadership is not confined to the management team. The best change leadership team is made up of the right cross-functional players at all strata of the organization in your own front lines. Load your teams with the right scope, diversity of talents and measurable outcomes. Be sure you understand the obstacles preventing success, remove them if you can or help the team understand the reality of the situation in dealing with them. Refer to item #2 above.
5. *Pursue the successive approximation theory.* Go for the small successes in three focus areas. Give teams realistic goals, measures and space to be creative. Vision determines destination, organizational values assure alignment, initiatives set the course and success measures calibrate achievement. Strategic planning does not replace leadership!
6. *Align reward and measurement systems so people see the relevance of individual, team and organizational company collaboration.*
7. *Fearlessly reward success and tell the story.* Communicating tough stuff is also important. People want the truth and also expect leadership solutions. By the same token, encourage some failure and allow for risk taking. Your goal is to create a business owner attitude in your employees. Remember the average change effort could take up to 18 months.

## Exhibit C

### **Positioning HR as a Strategic Partner: Eight Pragmatic Principles**

*Larry Bienati, PhD*

How can HR be perceived as a strategic player in an organization? How can HR gain the respect of a management team as something more than a cost center? How can HR position itself in developing a business approach to managing operations? How does HR get a seat at the leadership table?

#### **If It Cannot be Measured, It Cannot be Evaluated**

HR has a tough road in some organizations. We, as HR professionals, are victims of institutional memory lapses and the “what have you done for me lately syndrome.” We are now asked the classic re-engineering questions, “What value does HR have at this time? Do we need it? Can it be outsourced?” No longer can we rely simply on memory in a time when most organizations are driven by linkages to financial operating indicators and the 90-day return on investment mentality. *Conclusion: HR strategic partners must establish measurement systems to reflect their contributions.*

#### **The Reporting Relationship is Key**

A visible sign of an HR partnership occurs when the HR leader reports to the key decision maker of the firm and has a seat at the table. If the facilitator is layered deep within the organizational structure, then strategic effectiveness may be impacted. We must position ourselves at the top.

#### **The HR Plan Must Link to the Strategic Plan**

HR should participate in the strategic planning and budgeting process. Successful strategic partners link the HR plan to the business plan – they adapt HR initiatives to various parts of the strategic plan. For example, a firm decides that one part of the strategic plan is to improve profitability by 5 percent over the previous year. Ask yourself what impact HR can achieve if you: 1) reduce turnover by 5 percent; 2) explore alternative ways of staffing the operation; 3) reduce the costs per hire by 10 percent; 4) establish variable pay systems linked to productivity and sales targets; 5) reduce costs through HRIS automation; 6) reduce the workers compensation modification rates; 7)

reduce legal actions through preventive training; 8) enhance managerial and sales effectiveness through preventive training. This list is endless!

### **Overhead vs. Profit Enhancement**

Change this mindset immediately. In fact, I have renamed my department “Profit Enhancement Through People.” HR departments are not “necessary evils” in an organization. It is not a “catch-all department” that simply focuses on hiring, retaining and maintaining legal compliance. Like Finance, we manage human assets and should employ proper accounting procedures ourselves in measuring asset performance. Every dollar save in HR goes directly to the bottom line. Imagine an organization with a net operating profit of 10 percent. In this organization it takes \$10 in revenue to generate \$1 in pure profit. Every dollar saved in HR is therefore equal to \$10 in revenue. For example, the benefits professional who saved \$100,000 in benefit costs last year offset company revenues by \$1 million. Acquire *How to Measure Human Resources Management* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition, McGraw-Hill) by Jac Fitz-enz, it offers excellent ideas in measuring and costing over 18 process areas of HR.

### **Educate Yourself in Financial Principles**

Every HR professional should take a course in finance and accounting. Whether we are in the public, private, or no-profit sector, we are all driven by financial ratios, cash flows, and other financial benchmarks. The key to the HR partnership rests in “taking the lingo,” knowing what is happening financially, and equating as many HR processes to the financial objectives of the firm as possible. HR professionals should lead HR as a business unit and strategically time key financial initiatives. Consider connecting without the quantitative types in MIS, Finance, and Accounting and find ways to systematize your HR initiatives. Also, employ the excellent Saratoga Institute HR Benchmark Standards. For example, I produce quarterly financial reports that demonstrate how HR performance contributed to maximized shareholder wealth, staying within budget or meeting a critical aspect of the strategic plan.

### **Get Strategic or Get Outsourced**

Be careful of the HR “technocrat syndrome.” I am not discounting the value of being technically astute in all process areas of HR. More important though is our ability to: 1) facilitate change; 2) lead teams; 3) develop organizational

leaders; 4) establish systems to enhance worker productivity; 5) increase job satisfaction; and 6) provide for organizational continuity. HR professionals have a natural gift for dealing with people and facilitating the people side of the re-engineering/CQI process areas and linking the process side and employee engagement piece to the change management process.

Technical specialties in compensation, benefits, payroll, and even employee/labor relations can be outsourced today. Therefore, HR professionals should develop skills in organizational development techniques, business acumen and alignment of activities to achieve the strategic plan of the organization.

### **Don't Wait to Be Asked to Join the Inner Circle**

HR professionals are sometimes misperceived as strictly “touchy feely” and “spenders of organizational assets.” We have a mindset to change. The door to senior management respect may not open easily. It is up to you to find ways to provide value to the strategic direction, contribute to the bottom line, and be perceived as someone who understands the financial mission of the organization. You may have to invite yourself to the first few meetings. Determine senior management’s “hot buttons” and deliver small victories to each member of the senior team. Your ultimate value is measured by the level of respect you command by the line operations as a contributor to the continuity of the firm. *They* are the customer. Build the service level agreement of related the HR mission to the business plan of the organization.

### **Publish and Sell the Plan**

Like a religious experience, successful HR partners publish their strategic plan on a periodic basis. They demonstrate how HR programs link to the strategic vision. They capture successes and equate achievements to some level of measurement. They solicit feedback through surveys and “field ride-alongs” on HR effectiveness. Remember the 50-50 rule – strategic partners are visible in the field at least 50 percent of the time. They produce value by simplifying life, coaching, and creating supporting programs that really matter to the organizational mission. Now, go forth, do good and leave a legacy!



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