Vision + Values + Leadership = Performance

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Session: A4

Note: This is intended to be a background paper to an interactive session. Case studies and a power-point presentation will be provided at the session.

It can probably be taken as a given that most organisations are keen to develop the performance of its individuals and its business. And it is generally the HR practitioner that leads and becomes involved in the interventions that are designed to achieve that end result.

The key is to ensure that all parts of the formula

Vision + Values + Leadership

are linked and support each other to achieve the desired performance.

We have found many successful implementations have the HR Manager, in conjunction with the CEO, as the key change catalyst and change champion. The reason for the success is that the HR role is naturally one that goes right across the business and is connected to the people, while other roles tend to be more functionally based and ‘the business’ can be a distracting element when a change management project is taking place.

The formula provides the clue as to the sequence of events:
Vision:

A client has embarked on a major leadership development programme. Now in its third year they are seeing some improvement but were wondering why this improvement was not as great as it could have been. As part of the programme all managers receive 360 degree feedback and the latest overall results show that ‘Sharing the Vision’, that is, exciting people towards a future state, is one of the lowest scoring areas.

In the discussion around this finding, the managers realised that although there was a Vision statement, this did not have meaning, except for those who were involved in creating it. What was needed was to breathe meaning into the words and to translate the words into something meaningful for each division. An option the group explored was to have Divisional visions that, when integrated, would achieve the overarching organisational Vision. This would allow their teams to identify more closely with their own Divisional vision and to see the linkage with the organisational Vision.

So, starting with the vision, what we have found to be successful is:

- creating a vision where there is none, or
- refreshing a vision where this has become out-of-date, or
- reviewing a vision to ensure that it is truly a vision to aspire to in the 21st century;

and then promulgating that vision throughout the organisation in a way that will engage individuals and groups in understanding and ‘buying into’ its meaning.

There are many options in deciding how to promulgate the vision

- road-shows
- staff meetings (large groups)
- workshops for divisions or teams
- team meetings
- publications such as newsletters, pamphlets, posters

However, the pitfall many organisations encounter is that there is a belief that having done all of this, people will have ‘got it’ and it can therefore be business as usual.

The key to successful embedding of the vision is to continually make positive references to the Vision and to link the Vision in all aspects of the life of the organisation (see the suggestions contained under The Critical Role of the HR Manager).
Values:

The Vision can only be realised if certain things happen - and they have to happen in an aligned way. Key to this is alignment is that people operate within shared values as these determine the culture and behaviour as well as the quality of decisions that are made. So if the culture is the glue that enables the company to perform in an integrated way, the values are the active ingredients of that glue.

Organisations or groups can arrive at shared values in various ways:

- Senior Team go into a retreat and decide the values, then disseminate these through the organisation in ways similar to the Vision; or
- Senior Team provide the vision and then work with all or a representative group of their managers in coming up with shared values. These are then disseminated through the organisation;
- Senior team provide the vision, work with managers as above and a representative group of the company – and then disseminate the outcomes through the organisation;
- Senior team provide the vision, work with managers in arriving at draft values and an action plan, share this with a representative group of company to gain agreement, then disseminate these through the organisation;
- Senior team provide the vision, work with managers in arriving at draft values and an action plan and then form a working party to arrive at shared values.
- Senior team provide the vision, work with managers in arriving at draft values and and draft action plan, have a series of workshops to share work to date with all staff members to allow them to come up with suggested shared values, form a representative group to consider all the outputs and achieve consensus as to the shared values for final ratification by Senior Team. Disseminate or workshop back through the organisation for everyone to become engaged with the values.

The most effective approach often depends on the size and current culture of the organisation, but....

As a rule of thumb, the higher the involvement of everyone the quicker the take-up and ownership of the values.

Having decided on the shared values the next challenge is to ensure that they are understood and are demonstrated consistently across the organisation. Because managers are role models it is essential that they lead the way in this.
**Leadership:**

To lead the promulgation of the Vision and the demonstration of the values in behaviours across the organisation, frequently managers will need development in their leadership skills. This development is, of course, also designed to enable enhanced performance in all aspects of the business.

Successful implementation of the Vision and Values requires key influencers to role model the desired behaviours on a consistent basis. Building a climate where giving and receiving behavioural feedback occurs regularly, positively and is part of the culture will support leaders in being that role model and in challenging inappropriate behaviour in others.

HR Managers play a key role in

- determining leadership competencies (that support the Values),
- providing the learning opportunities for leaders to build those competencies
- reviewing the effectiveness of the learning and overall performance on the job.

The role modelling starts with the Chief Executive Officer and flows through to all team leaders. The most successful values-driven organisations are those where there is seamless congruency between the behaviour of the leaders at all levels and the organisation’s stated Values.

**The Critical Role of the HR Manager**

The Vision and Values need to be integrated into all HR and management policies and processes. For example:

- Recruitment – advertising and application forms include the Vision
- Selection – referring to the Vision and Values during interviews and linking a number of questions back to the Vision and including demonstration of the Values in the person specification for the role
- Introduction – commencing the programme with an exploration of the Vision, what it means, its focal point in the organisation, how it impacts on the individual’s role; and building understanding, then exploring, how individuals can demonstrate the Values
- Learning and Development – all learning interventions are tied back to the Vision and Values
• The Vision and Values are Integrated into the Performance Management process
• The Vision and Values are referred to and reflected in their intent in HR policies
• The Vision and Values are regularly referred to in senior management reports and presentations
• The Vision and Values are linked into customer service processes

and are an integral part of celebrations of success – either individual or business.

Critically, HR managers also perform the role of the corporate conscience at senior meetings, as well as provide a litmus test of how well the culture is flourishing through their dealings with staff at all levels.

Case study:

This organisation already had a strong vision that was made concrete for people by having a date by which that vision would be reality. It was clearly understood and referred to frequently across the organisation. However, a gap had been identified in the way in which people were going about achieving the vision. Frequent disagreements between divisions on delivery to customers, on priorities and on the way people were treated in the organisation pointed to a lack of common or shared values. The following is a summary of how that organisation developed shared values:

• A series of workshops were held, co-facilitated by an Executive and external facilitator to
  o engage people in thinking about their personal values
  o consider what the organisation’s values should be
  o draw up a list of preferred values
  o identify what will support and what will hinder these values becoming embedded in the company.

• A representative group covering all teams, locations and hierarchal positions considered the outputs of all workshops to arrive at suggested values and their meanings plus behaviours demonstrating the values and behaviours that are contrary to the values.

• The Values were endorsed by the Executive Team
• The representative group produced a booklet and also a video showing examples of the values in action compared with contra behaviours.
• This group played a big role in presenting the Values back to another round of workshops. Participants then considered how their personal values linked with the organisational values and what they needed to do to ensure they consistently demonstrated the values.

• These values became part of regular individual and team goal reviews

• The values were part of the recruitment process and a key part of the introduction programme – a modular programme covering several days over a period of two months. Values comprised a whole day split into two halves – the first was understanding the company values and how they linked to the vision and the second half was ‘making the values live’ thus taking it to the personal level.

• Leadership development workshops also followed to enable all levels of management to become skilled as leaders and to be able to role model the values consistently.

• Values became part of the performance review.

This company made significant increases in its profitability year after year. The company became an employer of choice – people really wanted to have time with the company as part of their CV. Key decisions always included checking proposals with the vision and the values. People enjoyed working at this company.

The organisation measured how much people displayed the values through a two yearly Values Survey instrument designed specifically for them and the Surveys demonstrated the values were really strong. So much so that the organisation was put up for sale – they were so successful that their shareholders really wanted to capitalise on their success. This process took a long time with many iterations of due diligence, and was a very testing time of uncertainty for all concerned. However, very few people left and the level of profitability continued to increase. Many people talked about the fact that the strong values continued throughout this time and were a key factor in retaining people and maintaining the loyalty to the company, its managers and its goals.

During the session this, and other case studies, will be discussed further.

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