

# **STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP**

## **A. LEADERSHIP & STRATEGY**

Leadership and Strategy are inseparable. Leadership is the process of influencing people to achieve a pre-determined objective or goal. The market place is increasingly becoming uncertain and sophisticated, making it difficult for the top leadership of organizations to design long-term plans. A sound strategic plan requires bold leadership. Strategic leadership requires two main elements;

- a. Be proactive and forward-thinking ( Think long term as an organization)
- b. Incorporate the qualities and characteristics of strategic leadership as you lead,

## **B. CHARACTERISTICS OF A STRATEGIC LEADER**

- i. Good at delegation - They know how to grow others and determine when to delegate tasks. They don't unnecessarily overload the staff but assigns thought-provoking tasks to motivate them.
- ii. Motivated to pursue strategies that improve the chances of achieving success both at the team and organization level.
- iii. Self-aware – Refer to the self-leadership module for details on this topic. Self-aware leaders know what about them that put others off and what characteristics motivate them to achieve optimally. They also try to understand their team members. The leader is a master of their moods and actions, understands how their actions or lack of them might affect those around them.
- iv. Compassionate and emotionally intelligent. The leaders should be compassionate and empathetic the people around them.
- v. Articulate about long term goals and vision- The strategic leaders communicates the intended direction with clarity. They express the organizational vision in a simplistic way to make the members understand at ease. The leader should design many ways of keeping the organizational/departmental goals and vision alive in the team members' e.g.
  - ✓ Highlight them during departmental meetings
  - ✓ Have flipcharts and signage displaying the goals ....

✓ **Kindly name others...**

- vi. Thinkers – The leader takes time before acting, is aware of the impact of their intended actions.
- vii. Fair and pursue work-related justice; they use their powers sensibly and wisely.
- viii. Flexible – The strategic leader sees problems from diverse angles and actively engage the team members to provide proposals to make their decisions better.
- ix. Dependable – The leaders are loyal to their colleagues and the organization. People can count on them when in trouble or when tough decisions have to be made.
- x. Good communicators – The leaders keep everyone up-to-date with what is happening in the firm and about future intentions.

NB: Organizations need to align their processes and teams in a constant learning mode to achieve the strategic plan by way of continuous training and benchmarking.

## **C. ROLES OF A STRATEGIC LEADER**

- i. Visioning- setting the high-level appreciation of the organization which includes; vision, mission and prospective corporate values
- ii. Objective setting - this is developing the visioning aspects created and twisting them into objectives for a certain time frame.
- iii. Allocating of resources –decisions which involve the allocation of human and capital resources to achieve set goals.
- iv. Strategic Trade-offs (prioritization) – business decisions always entail a degree of risk; therefore, there is a need to take this decision into account to ensure the optimal strategic plan falls into place.

## D. EXAMPLES OF STAKEHOLDERS

The management's priority is to align available resources to the organizational vision and maintain commitment from the various stakeholders to meet and exceed customer satisfaction. A strategy aims at positioning an organization for competitiveness. Examples of stakeholders are:

- i. Government – By complying to the law
- ii. Customer – Providing quality products
- iii. Suppliers – Honoring contractual obligations
- iv. Business owners – Acting in the best interest of the overall growth of the firm.
- v. Corporate social responsibility beneficiaries – By giving back to the community in dignity.



**Reflection:** Name at least three ways in which a leader could reach out to employee families to partner in the achievement of business objectives.

Possible strategies would include using their input regarding areas of improvement to achieve work-life balance for the employees. It is a common conclusion that a work-life balance improves employee productivity.

## E. STRATEGIC THINKING

It is an ability to plan for the foreseeable future by strategically materializing ideas to adapt to the changing environment. Possessing vital thinking skills informs a person how to formulate a problem, make a choice, solve a problem, and pursue an opportunity.

Strategic leadership is the capacity of managers to make long term decisions and to drive the organization towards success. Reflection: Name key organizational or departmental stakeholders in order of priority. Give reasons to justify the ordering.

## **F. STRATEGIC INFLUENCE**

This is the formation and nurturing of strategic relationships over the long term. It is essential to create relationships that have long term effects on the business. Draft agreements and contracts that will manage the contact in the next 3 to five years at a minimum. A strategic leader should exert influence over each individual to;

- i. Align peoples' goals to the long-term strategic direction of the organization. If one of your employees has young children and their long term goal is to give them proper medical care, consider providing a medical insurance benefit to increase the chances of locking the staff in the long term. I am certain one of the distinct organizational goals is to retain competent personnel in the long run. Matching the two goals guarantees the firm happy and engaged team.

**Reflection:** Name other staff personal and organizational goals that a strategic leader could match and give reasons for your answer.....

- ii. Persuade individuals to strategic initiatives and goals, causing them to be committed in them.
- iii. Allocate resources in line with the strategic intent/goals
- iv. Communicate effectively to other staff on insights, strategy formulation, execution, and implementation to increase an organization able to respond to market dynamics.

**Reflection:** Rate yourself on a scale of 1-5 (1 being the least) to explore your strategic influencing skills. Be honest as you can be.

- i. How well do you understand your impact on other people, and how that impact affects the quality of collective work?
- ii. To what extent does your network consist of a wide variety of people who are outside your routine work?
- iii. How accurate is your assessment of the political landscape in your organization?
- iv. How difficult has it been for you to navigate the political terrain without negatively impacting on your credibility and relationships?
- v. To what extent have you been able to develop a compelling and inspiring vision?

- vi. How challenging is it for you to engrave enthusiasm and a real commitment to a vision of the future in the hearts and minds of others?
- vii. How well have you been able to find creative ways for people to discuss the unforeseeable’?
- viii. To what extent do you explore other peoples’ points of view to deepen your understanding of their point of view?
- ix. How difficult is it for you to read and understand the needs and motivations of others?
- x. To what extent are you able to use that information to communicate with others in a way that is meaningful to them, and that influences them?

**NB:** Ensure to have a candid self-discussion to unearth that which limits your growth to full potential. You could also ask a trusted colleague or friend to provide genuine feedback regarding the above

## **G. STEPS TO DEVELOP STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP SKILLS**

Strategic leadership skills play a major role in contributing to your professional and personal growth. Before developing a solid strategic leadership skill, evaluate the current leadership you possess.

Examples of strategic leadership skills you may want to evaluate and grow?

- i. Communication skills- it refers to the ability to convey the organization's strategic goals and encouraging employees to work towards them
- ii. Planning skills- clearly laying out a set of guidelines to follow when trying to achieve the company’s goals and objectives
- iii. Commitment- to accomplish the company’s goals while also tracking the personal growth of employees.
- iv. Motivation- encouraging employees to achieve their personal best, which significantly contributes to the company’s growth.

Steps to develop strategic leadership skills;

Step 1: Predict

Step 2: Challenge

Step 3: Translate

Step 4: Decide

## Finding the Root Cause



NB: Ensure to have a candid self-discussion to unearth that which limits your growth to full potential. You could also ask a trusted colleague or friend to provide genuine feedback regarding the above.

## H. HOW TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATION

- Learn business English formally and informally. Informally would be by watching business news etc. Name other ways.....
- Inviting others' opinions when developing a strategy. Have round-table meetings and be a keen listener on how others present their points.
- Look for a mentor
- Mentor others – By looking for an opportunity to mentor others, you will definitely look for ways to grow your strength in communication.

## **I. WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR COMMUNICATION SKILLS**

- i. Make Consistent Eye Contact – Your body language matters a lot in communication. Make another party convinced that you care about what they are saying to you. In reciprocal, they will pay attention to what you say.
- ii. Ensure that your posture demonstrates interest. Consider adopting an open stance and avoid fidgeting etc.  
**Reflection:** What other people's body posture annoys you when you are talking to them?
- iii. Add previously communicated details to a conversation to demonstrate that you were indeed listening.
- iv. Listen to understand the meaning of the discussion; otherwise, you will respond in an “annoying manner.”
- v. Rehearse what you intend to present. Reduce reading when talking.

## **J. WATCH THIS CLIP TO APPRECIATE COMMUNICATION BLANDERS**



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rUTPHmbDifg>

## **K. DEVELOPING A VISION, MISSION AND VALUES STATEMENT**

A Vision statement explains what the business aspires to be in the long term, e.g., being the best in a particular area

A Mission statement describes what the organization will do to achieve the vision, mainly revolves around the principal products offered by the business.

Values refer to the behaviors that the business and the employees should portray to achieve the vision and mission.