
WHAT'S IMPORTANT | Volume VI, Issue 3 | June 2, 2010

"What's Important" is a universal concern. The phrase resonates with an infinite number of meanings. What's important is both a question and an answer, depending on the situation.

No two leaders are created equal, just as no two employees are cut from the same cloth. Churchill and Gandhi - very different men with very different strengths - yet each made profound world contributions.

From C-level executives to the newest summer intern, every person has a unique strength seeded within them. The challenge is to create a business environment that recognizes those seeds and allows them grow.

"The purpose of a leader is to create a context in which each person will make a difference by performing to his or her unique potential," observed veteran business strategist Tony Manning. We emphasize the Unique Selling Propositions of our products, but what about the Unique Strengths Contribution of our employees?

A Gallup Organization survey of 10 million people worldwide found that only one-third of employees reported having the opportunity to do what they do best on the job everyday. Those in jobs that allowed them to exercise their strengths were more engaged and productive at work and expressed a higher quality of life in general.

Even executives can occasionally stray from doing what they do best.

For 11 years, Fred was the successful CFO of a well-respected company. He enjoyed his job and his daily focus on enhancing efficiencies, maximizing returns on investment, and supporting the CEO from a strategic standpoint. When the CEO was unexpectedly ousted, Fred's strong track record of helping to improve the bottom line made him the board's first choice for CEO.

Fred hesitantly agreed to take the position, but within four months he found he had lost the joy he once had for his work. His love of forecasting, modeling and financial oversight had been replaced with networking, travel and high-level deal making. While he was the perfect CFO for the company, he did not excel as CEO. Ultimately, the company suffered from not having his insights and passion where they served best.

Fred convinced the board to conduct a search for a more fitting CEO. He returned to his position as CFO, relieved and with greater insights to help him play to his true strengths.

As Nancy O'Neill observed, "When different talents and ideas rub up against each other, there is friction, yes. But also sparks, fire, light and eventually-brilliance." A concerted effort to mine

that brilliance can become an organizational strength, one that ultimately sets our companies apart from the competition.

What's Important is that organizations grow stronger when the natural strengths of executives and employees are recognized, valued and supported.

Email me at chuck@durakis.com to share your thoughts.

Thanks,

Chuck