



Successful Habits of Outstanding Organisms

Understanding the Essentials of First-Class Leadership

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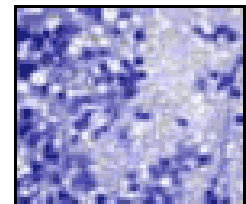
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0) Introduction

What are the secrets of success? This is an often-asked question and there are thousands of scientists and uncountable publications that tried to answer this. In the meantime it is clear that there are countless ways to reach success and among these there are certain habits and traits common to successful people as well as successful organizations.

Since organizations consist of people, usually highly influenced by one or several leaders, i.e. people, one may wonder, are there certain success habits common to both people and organizations? My research and experience clearly say, yes, there are! In fact, more than that, alignment of these common success habits of top leaders and their organizations assure their continuous outstanding results.

1) Definition of Organisms



Organisms is a term widely used in biology, for example defined as

*An individual form of life, such as a plant, animal, bacterium, protist, or fungus; a body made up of organs, organelles, or other parts that work together to carry on the various processes of life.*¹⁾

Another definition is:

*A system regarded as analogous in its structure or functions to a living body: the social organism.*²⁾

I decided to use the term Organism for both individuals and organizations in order to highlight that both are “living bodies” and that certain “natural rules” are applicable not only to individuals but also to organizations consisting of people.

2) The common habits and traits of outstanding individuals and organizations

The success (and failure) of any organization is most influenced by the leader(s) of the organization, hence when talking about successful organisms, I relate more to the leaders of the organization, bearing in mind that of course, all members of any organization influence its success to a certain extent. Every sensible leader knows that without his/her people the leader is nothing and the art of leading is to influence people in a way that the individuals effectively and efficiently contribute to the success of the organization.

2.1) Establish a Vision which is simple, clear and straightforward – keep communicating it

A global medium sized company X has a vision that they aim to become a leading supplier of product A in the Asian market. Their market share worldwide is approx. 5%, in Asia below 2%. The no. 1 in the market accounts for 35% worldwide and 25% in Asia. No. 2 and 3 are both in the range of 20% worldwide and 15% in Asia. X is no. 7 worldwide and no. 8 in Asia.

Three years after stating that vision, the position of X has hardly improved. What went wrong?

I talked to several second line executives of X and made the following findings:

- the vision was not clear enough; the definition of “leading supplier” was unclear
- the vision was communicated in one big shot during the introduction, then three years later almost none of the executives could clearly recall the vision
- the executives had problems adopting that vision as they felt that it was not supported by an adequate action plan
- the executives felt that top management defined a vision without consulting the second line managers about the feasibility and sensibility of the vision (a remark of one executive: “Why would we want to become a leading supplier in Asia? Don’t they know that the market prices for our products there are totally destroyed and that we never will be able to run a profitable business there?”)
- the executives were soon losing faith in ever making the vision a reality as the mountain in front of them seemed to be too huge and their “horse power” too little to reach even near the top

How can we make it better?

- It is OK that top management develops the vision, however, **before** you implement it, don't forget to give it a reality check with those expected to make it happen
- Make your vision as clear and definite as possible: instead of saying that you want to become "a leading supplier", rather say that you want to become No. 1 or No. 2 in Asia. Don't try to put in too many components and details. These should be part of the detailed strategy to make your vision a reality.
- Drop limiting beliefs when determining your vision, e.g. even if you have only 3% market share in Asia today, why would it be impossible to become No. 1? Yes, there are lots of reasons, but leaders are not there to look for excuses but to find ways to overcome obstacles and reach outstanding results
- No vision without strategy! Work out your action plan and make it clear how you can turn your vision in reality
- Communicate, communicate, communicate! People tend to get stuck in their daily work and lose focus easily. Keep the organism (yourself and the organization) on track with continuous reminders about where you are supposed to go

You are the leader (of yourself and your organization). Defining the target (vision) and keeping it alive is the leader's job. Determining how to get there (strategy) and how to implement it (tactics) is the manager's job.