



How Does Leadership Help You Develop a High Performance Operation?

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What distinguishes a high performance operation from others? What are the reasons for its consistent excellence in performance? This is the fourth in a series of six articles which will outline actions that you can take to move your operation forward and increase your stature within your organization.

Leadership. High performance organizations have strong, clear, inspirational and future-oriented leaders.

If you spend most of your time dealing with day to day activities, then you are managing and not leading. As a leader, you must spend a significant amount of time focusing on the future. You need to continually scan the horizon to see what opportunities and threats lay ahead.

Make sure that you have a clear understanding for the purpose of your organization. Create a vision of what you would like for the organization to look like within the next several years. Define how the organization and your staff will achieve its purpose. This vision, however, cannot be rigid. You must constantly make course adjustments as rules and conditions change.

As a leader, it is important to articulate the values of the organization to the staff and hold them accountable for adopting these values. If, for example, your organization values customer service, then you should insure that it is a factor in staff evaluations and performance reviews. There should not be any fuzziness or uncertainty in the evaluation criteria.

Leaders in high performance organizations tightly control two or three things and let the staff deal with the rest. What are your key performance indicators which answer the question, "How do I know where we are?" Intensely manage critical issues such as attention to customers, cost containment, enrollment and innovation.

Manage the balance of the work through objectives. Push decision making down to the lowest level. This creates room for the staff to utilize their own initiative and to develop a sense of autonomy. Encourage them to be creative in developing solutions to the situations that they encounter.

Lead by example and don't ask the staff to do anything that you wouldn't do. Where are you during the first day of classes when there are long lines and irate students in the lobby? Hopefully, your answer is that you are out front addressing student concerns and more importantly setting the example for the staff.

Summary. Aren't these the same things that you would ask of your boss? Look in the mirror and ask the question, "Would I follow me?"