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## Content

How to use this Booklet	4
A Framework For Thought	4
Leadership's Role In Success	5
Leadership & Management	7
What Tasks Do Leaders Need To Undertake?	9
Setting Direction	10
Aligning People	12
Motivating & Inspiring People	16
Becoming A Leader	20
The Traits Of An Excellent Leader	21
Building Your Character	22
Lead In Actions	27
Share The Hardships Of Employees	28
Motivate & Inspire Emotionally	30
Assign Clearly Defined Tasks	32
Drive Your Organisation Through Strategy	34
Challenges	35
Excellent Leadership	38
Key Notes	40
Leadership Action	40
Leadership Tasks	40
Leadership Challenges	41
About the Author	46

## 1. Setting Direction

Since the primary function of leadership is to facilitate change, setting the new direction of such change is a fundamental task. This task, however, does not require planning, whether that planning be short term or long term. Planning does not lead to change; it may merely produce orderly results. Although planning is a command and control function of management, it tends to replicate history - 'Let's take last year and increase it by 10 per cent' and as such does not provide the forum in which 'change setting' can realistically take place. Further, planning is often used as a political tool for one section of the business to win out over another. This is an important distinction (vision versus planning) that must be considered carefully. Many businesses create 'black holes' that represent an annual planning process with the notion that their business's future will evolve from this process; most of them do not have a future.

Changes in direction are expressed through visions and strategies. Visions and strategies provide a framework within which planning may take place; planning ensures visions and strategies are feasible and actioned.

What is required to set direction and create visions and strategies is a more intuitive process whereby the leader understands the relationships and forces that exist in their environment and perceives the direction required to orienteer a course through the interacting forces.

A well-conducted strategic business planning exercise will provide leaders with the ability to blend factual analysis with intuition to deliver solid workable strategies. These exercises most importantly also deliver the opportunity for leaders to draw together key persons throughout the businesses in the crafting of visions and strategies which then become a community product.

Visions and strategies express where a business should be and provide a feasible way in general terms of how to get there. Visions are not necessarily a radical grand scheme whose basis is unrealistic or improbable. Rather, they express, usually quite clearly, where the leader wants to see the business at some future date, in one sense and what it will take to get there. The vision is based on sound judgement with an element of risk inbred and may well be quite conservative whilst at the same time delivering a real challenge to the enterprise.

*Describe the direction that you have set for your business.*

## 2. Aligning People

When you begin to discuss change within a business, the common reaction of management is to pull out the organisational chart and see how everyone is going to be physically reorganised. Who will be promoted, who will lose their job, who will get a better job title and larger office? The question of change is seen by many as an organisational task, a problem to be solved mechanically. However, the concept of merely fitting people where you want them to go does not generally work well with people. They have at times the tendency of not wanting to be pushed.

Also, within large businesses, few areas seem to have true autonomy. One division is unable to act without the assistance of the others. Each must consider the impact of its actions on the other. Therefore to get everyone moving in the same direction, all parts/areas/divisions must move at the same time, in the same direction.

'Aligning' is not an organisational task. It is a communication function. Further, it is not merely a matter of getting everyone to move but rather communicating in such a way that they, in fact, want to move on their own accord. The communication grid must include anyone who can assist the business implement its strategies and anyone who can block the achievement of the visions.

Communicating this change in direction can at times be a difficult task in that you must ensure that all the relevant participants comprehend and accept the alternate vision, bearing in mind that understanding will not automatically lead to acceptance.

One critical aspect that underpins or may undermine the ability to align the business participants behind the alternate vision is the credibility of the leadership of the business. The track record of the person delivering the message, the content of the message, the integrity and trustworthiness of the leadership and the consistency of their words and deeds all go towards the credibility of the leadership.

Further, alignment must equal empowerment. One of the problems businesses currently face is that their participants feel powerless. Even if these participants understand and accept the alternate vision presented to them and then note an irregularity they feel should be corrected, they will not act unless such action has been positively reinforced. If they have learnt through experience that management may well not look favourably on their 'initiative', they will not act nor expose themselves to reprimand. Have you ever worked within a business where the expressions 'that's against policy', 'you know how much that is going to cost', 'it's not budgeted for', 'do as you are told and do not think' and alike, are spoken day after day until participants just do not even care any more?

The aligning process, if properly executed, will empower participants in the business by:

Providing a clear sense of direction throughout the business. All levels of the business will know the direction they are expected to move in and will feel the authority to act in pursuing that direction.

Creating momentum. As everyone is moving in the same direction, the momentum generated will draw anyone in conflict into the flow and assist in overcoming resistance.

Finally, the greatest enemies of the alignment process are not apathy, laziness or the incompetence of the participants. They are political self-interest, a fear of the future, a fear of failure and an unwillingness to give up the perks and power base of higher management.

*List three ways in which you have created personal credit-ability within your business in the last 3 months?*

*Describe the communication approach you adopt to make your messages crystal clear?*

*List five barriers in your business that stop participants from following your messages.*