LeaderPerfect Newsletter

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Creating a Results-Oriented Work Culture
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Most organizations routinely ask their people, "What have you accomplished this past year?" This question may be posed either to individuals or to units within the organization.

The responses generally fall into one of two categories. They are either weighted around activities or they are weighted around results.

In the first case the response is a lengthy listing of initiatives launched and actions undertaken. In the second case the listing is weighted around milestones reached, things accomplished, and outcomes attained.

While both activities and accomplishments are important in any organization, it's outcomes, not actions and activity that are most important. The vital issue is not, "What things did we do?" but "What results did we get?"

What Ultimately Counts

In my workshops on leadership and management, I regularly emphasize the importance of creating a results-oriented culture. I emphasize that activity, no matter how impressive or how well done, has little meaning if it fails to achieve appropriate results.

Ultimately management and leadership are both charged with getting results — nothing less. Thus, exceptional managers and leaders always surround themselves with a results-oriented organization. Within such organizations everyone recognizes that effort and good intentions are no substitute for results.

Results-oriented organizations have eight vital characteristics which they share in common:

- **Achievement Focused** — They do not ask, "How hard did we try?" or "How much effort did we make?" They always ask, "What did we achieve? Did we attain the right outcome?"
- **Alignment** — They align everything and everyone in the organization to maximize capability, capacity, and throughput.

- **Absolute Clarity on Expectations** — They make certain that every person at every level knows exactly what is expected from him or her personally, as well as the standards for meeting these expectations.

- **Accelerated Execution** — They studiously avoid bottlenecks. They emphasize timely execution of plans and responsibilities above everything except values, vision, and quality. They never sacrifice these in the interest of speed.

- **Accountability** — They hold everyone in the organization personally accountable for meeting goals, deadlines, responsibilities, and standards.

- **Assessment** — They continually evaluate and measure results and effectiveness. And they immediately implement needed corrections.

- **Accurate Feedback Systems** — They provide both formal and informal rapid feedback mechanisms to keep top management fully apprised of things that the organization needs to know or learn.

- **Adaptability** — They design their organizational structure in such a way that they can quickly change direction and adapt to new realities.

Making Your Own Assessment

Based on these eight principles, I've developed a simple instrument for evaluating whether your organization is poised to be a results-oriented culture. The instrument builds around eight statements, which I've listed below. As you look through these statements, respond to each one with the appropriate answer from this list: Never, Rarely, Occasionally, Usually, Always.

- We thoroughly evaluate our effectiveness on the basis of whether we achieved the outcomes that we desired.

- Our organization is well-structured to maximize our capabilities, capacity, and throughput.

- When adding personnel, we evaluate candidates in terms of their ability to help us increase our capabilities and capacity.

- People in our organization are absolutely clear on what is expected of them personally and the standards by which these expectations will be measured.

- We are timely in our execution of plans and responsibilities.

- Everyone in the organization is held personally accountable for meeting goals, deadlines, responsibilities, and standards.

- We have a program in place by which we continually evaluate and measure results and effectiveness.

- We have built rapid feedback systems into our organization to apprise leaders of things that the organization needs to know or learn.

- When required, we quickly change direction or adapt to new realities.

Your response to each statement should be either Usually or Always. Any other response indicates a priority area in which work must be done to position your organization for exceptional results.

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