

Member's Quarterly

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Feature

Thriving in the Post COVID World: Start with Shared Purpose

Creating nimble and adaptable organizations

Ron Pizzo
LL.B.
Partner,
Pink Larkin

What do you want your organization to look like after this pandemic? The way to the future must include a nimble approach to adapting and managing change while at the same time creating an environment that speaks to security and stability. Are you managing this challenge?

Stephen Covey, in his book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, unveiled a management matrix with four quadrants. Quadrant I deals with matters that are urgent and important: dealing with crisis management, pressing problems and deadline-driven projects. Quadrant II looks at matters that are not urgent but important and includes such activities as relationship building and recognizing new opportunities. Since this pandemic hit, the managers and leaders I have worked with are stuck in Quadrant I. They are overwhelmed and don't even think about Quadrant II. Quadrant II activities are the ones that create the path for increasing your organization's ability to be nimble and adaptable.

When a sports team ends its season, the team's attention turns to the next season. Coaches know that the players are the ones on the field of play executing the game plan. What the players achieve determines whether the next season is a success or failure. A coach can have the best playbook, the most innovative and effective game plan, but if he or she does not have the team to execute that plan, the playbook is of little use.

A coach also knows that the effectiveness of the team is not just a function of talent. Success in sports is determined by how well the team pulls together and works together. The annals of sports lore are riddled with stories of highly talented teams that have failed to achieve and teams with little talent that rose to meteoric heights. An Olympic example, the "Miracle on Ice" is a true story about a group of US college students that defeated the four-time defending Soviet Union gold medalist hockey team, a team with among the best hockey players in the world.

Dr. Matthew Lieberman, one of the world's foremost authorities on the study of social neuroscience wrote a book *Social: Why our Brains are Wired to Connect*. In his chapter on 'The Business of Social Brains', after reviewing the evidence, concluded:

The assumption that productivity is about smart people working hard on their own has been masking the fact that individual intelligence may only be optimized when it is enhanced through social connections to others in the group. Social connections are essentially the original internet, connecting different pockets of intelligence to make each pocket more than it would otherwise be by itself.

When a coach plans for the upcoming season, the coach recognizes that the game plan, though important, is not enough. The game plan has to match up with the players on the team. The team has to buy into the system and team goals. Each team member has to understand his or her role on the team and know that that role is worthwhile and important for achieving team goals. Team members have to be appreciated for what they do. Ultimately, the team, players and coaches have to buy into a shared team identity.

Quadrant I activities are those activities that create the game plan. The work you do in Quadrant II determines whether that plan succeeds or fails. Covey wrote, 'start with the end in mind.' When you know the end, the way forward becomes clearer.

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Does your team have a sense of its shared purpose? Has that shared purpose been committed to paper in simple and straightforward language for everyone to understand? Did you involve the entire group or team in creating the shared purpose? A group functions best when its members clearly understand its purpose, perceive the purpose as worthwhile, understand each other's role and feel appreciated. When people share a plan and know what is important, the path forward in uncertain times is clearer. So, for Quadrant II work, start here — shared purpose.

Ron Pizzo is a lawyer, certified coach and facilitator. He works with Pink Larkin in Halifax as a labour lawyer and as a workplace restoration facilitator. He can be reached via email at rpizzo@pinklarkin.com

