

# NUGGETS OF KNOWLEDGE

## *Developing A High-Performance Culture?*

In the early 1960s, President John F. Kennedy stated that he wanted to send a man to the moon and bring him back safely by the end of the decade; a pretty lofty goal. Senator George Smathers from Florida agreed with the “lofty goal” part. So, before voting to secure funds for the initiative, he wanted to make sure he made the right decision. He visited Cape Canaveral to do a bit of detective work on his own. After much time, observation, questioning and exploration he still had not made a decision.

At the end of the day he saw a worker cleaning up and asked what her job was. Her reply was simple, “I’m part of a team that’s going to send a man to the moon and bring him back safely by the end of the decade.” Decision made!

This is an example of strategic alignment at its best. Everyone knows the organization’s charge, and all of the stars are in alignment (strategic intention: systems, processes, leadership, management, expectations, authority, responsibility, individual empowerment and supportive behavior). But what happens when the stars are misaligned; when the systems and departments are out of sync? What happens when a department exists for the good of itself and individuals behave selfishly rather than for the greater customer and organizational good?

The simple fact is that the more an organization’s systems and processes are aligned with its strategic intention—and all of the employees support this alignment behaviorally—the greater the opportunity for success.

In fact, if the plan is sound, it’s almost impossible to fail no matter how ambitious the organization or that plan is—even if that includes sending a man to the moon. Organizations are complex entities. Effective leadership calls for developing strategy and implementing that strategy to secure a competitive advantage. This means structuring the organization to achieve that strategy, ensuring the internal processes are focused on customer needs and focusing all of the people within the organization. The George Smathers story exemplifies the mindset of and results generated by strategic alignment.

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“When there is no vision, the people perish.”

--Old Testament, Proverbs 29:18

“The secret of success is constancy of purpose. “

- Benjamin Disraeli

“Until input (thought) is linked to a goal (purpose) there can be no intelligent accomplishment.”

- Paul G. Thomas

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So, how can you as leaders really know how effective your organization and its strategy actually are? Rather than guess where the disconnects are, why not consider an instrument that pinpoints the strengths and limitations so that goal directed actions can occur—exactly what was needed to send a man to the moon and nothing less! Organizational assessments are diagnostics that measure how effective and efficient your organization is.

Think about it. Every once in a while it is necessary to take stock and ensure that the organization is focused on a clear strategy and that everyone within it is in alignment with what needs to be accomplished. After all, we go to the Doctor periodically, we do a mental assessment on home improvement needs before we clean the garage and remodel the kitchen, and we even consciously check out our waistline and general overall health once or twice a year to determine what we need to do to make improvements. Why shouldn't we do the same for our organization? How do you know that your resources are being properly allocated, and how can you better utilize your limited resources? What are the alternatives in hidden cost, productivity, customer and employee satisfaction, and profits? If an organization's structure does not support its strategy, it is out of alignment and the strategy will not be achieved. You can limp along and even do 'OK', but are you really satisfied with the 'OK' part? In Jim Collins Book, *Good to Great* (an important organizational study) the first sentence is, "Good is the enemy of great." If your answer to the OK question is yes, then you've probably exhausted all you can get from this article, and an organizational assessment is not an option you are likely to explore.

Organizations that learn to identify new relationships between what they do and the results they seek can further increase the gap between themselves and their competitors. Does this sound familiar: Constant radical change, uncertainty, new rules and regulations, increased customer demands, and alphabet soup programs? How to manage it and how to thrive under these conditions depends a great deal upon how well your organization is aligned.

## ***Getting Started:***

First, are you in agreement that senior management must determine that there is a need for data in order to understand your organization? Second, are you committed to using this data to better allocate your resources to improve results? Third, gather the data.

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## ***Selecting the Instrument.***

Opt for one that has a proven track record. A safe and wise bet is an assessment modeled after the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award. The seven Baldrige categories provide a framework that has been proven time and time again. The results generated by Baldrige winners are consistent and astonishing.

The seven Baldrige categories are:

**1. Leadership** – Includes creating and sustaining values, organizational direction, performance expectations and customer focus that promotes performance excellence.

**2. Strategic Planning** – How the organization sets direction and how plans are put into action.

**3. Customer Focus** – Addresses how the organization determines the requirements and expectations of customers. It also addresses how the organization strengthens relationships with customers and determines their level of satisfaction.

**4. Information and Analysis** – Deals with the use of data and information in the organization to better understand areas for improvement and how the organization is performing.

**5. Human Resources Development and Management** – Determines how employees are encouraged to maximize their potential, as well as maintaining an environment conducive for performance excellence.

**6. Process Management** – Identifying how processes are designed, managed, improved and their cycle times reduced.

**7. Business Results** – Focuses on performance improvement in key business areas and how effectively these results are communicated throughout the organization.

These seven criteria are called the ***Criteria for Excellence*** and address all of the elements for the health and survival of your organization.

## ***Why Business Leaders Don't Do It?***

Believe it or not, there are some organizations afraid to hear the truth. Some organizations are just not interested. Others really don't want to uncover issues that we are not prepared to face right now. Sounds strange but true. This is like favoring a doctor who touches up the X-rays. Ignoring reality flagrantly disregards the "Confront the Brutal Facts" principle from Jim Collins' important book *Good to Great*. Good decisions are impossible without an honest confrontation of the brutal facts.

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## **Who Should Conduct an Assessment?**

If any of these symptoms sound familiar, give serious consideration to assessing your organization:

- Profitability is slipping
- Customers are defecting
- Employee turnover is high
- Market share is eroding
- Internal conflict is the order of the day, excessive meetings, lack of personal accountability, communication breakdown, time management issues, reactive rather than proactive thinking (shall I continue?)
- You spend more time reacting to competition
- Or the best reason of all.... You just want to improve!

By Grant Stewart, Performance Matrix LLC. (Baldrige Criteria Source: D.I.A.L.O.G, Achievement Seminars International, a Division of Resource Associates Corporation.)

## **Motivational Quotes**

“The way to get good ideas is to get lots of ideas and throw the bad ones away.”

- Linus Pauling, American chemist

“ I use not only all the brains I have, but all I can borrow.”

- Woodrow Wilson

## **Jerrold HR Solutions: Turning Potential Into Performance**

Jerrold HR Solutions is a company that focuses on helping clients discover their untapped potential and turn that potential into performance. By “partnering” with our clients to identify their individual needs we customize processes that enable them to develop a substantial competitive advantage needed for their future success. We work with companies in all or some of the following areas: executive & management development, goal setting, leadership, time strategies, sales development and improving communications, allowing our clients to improve profits through empowering their people. As for our individual professional clients we focus on all areas of career management guiding them toward the fulfillment of their goals and thereby ultimately arriving at their desired created vision.

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