

Great Management

It's more than just a promotion.



by Jim Haudan

ENGAGEMENT HINGES on creating a clear line of sight from the marketplace to every employee so they can execute strategy. In working with clients, we've seen workers who had voted to strike willingly change their votes, people who had been cynical and apathetic become excited and motivated, and companies who, in several months, achieved results they thought would take several years.

However, we've also heard accounts of poor results—one involving a financial services client who was trying to execute a new strategy across the entire banking system. Visual tools helped its thousands of employees understand the dramatic changes in the marketplace, the newly crafted strategy, and the core economics. The project was a huge initial success.

Because they were concerned about *sustainability*, the bank's leaders hired a cultural anthropologist to monitor the implementation and measure its impact on people's actions and behaviors. The anthropologist found that change was sustained *only* when the managers interpreted the strategy accurately and translated it into *real meaning* for their teams. Where managers *did not* do this, people concluded that the meetings they attended about the strategic goals were not primarily intended for them!

Creating a line of sight across the business for all stakeholders is stopped if managers can't interpret and translate the strategy at the team and individual level. Managers then become a "cork" in the execution of strategy. To engage people in the game plan, managers need to interpret and translate new strategic actions.

Think of an organization as an orchestra—its musicians have different competencies, and they all contribute to the performance. When a conductor is needed, leadership often picks the best instrumentalist, the head violinist, for example. However, despite her talent as a violinist, she is ill-prepared to

be the conductor. One assignment is about being an expert in a specific area and mastering it. The other is about blending the talents of everyone in the orchestra into a high-performing team. Most former head violinists can't interpret and translate the new music that *must* be played strategically!

So managers get a double whammy. They ask, "How can I engage and connect people in the strategy by interpreting and translating it effectively?" and "How can I lead by being an expert in one element while getting the team to perform together?" Managers see their plight as difficult at best and hopeless at worst. So, when trying to execute strategy through people, managers can be either the cork or catalyst to generating results. Most managers struggle to evolve from being an expert in their area to calling out the expertise of others so the team can perform masterfully. And yet managers' most important role is to successfully interpret and

translate the new strategy to their team members in a way that *makes sense to them*.

What Managers Must Know

All managers must know four things:

1. Know the business—everything from the big picture of the marketplace to core processes to strategic direction. This step is vital in making the strategy a reality.

2. Know their role. Most managers discount the importance of their role—to *create a great team*. It's not all about projects and process, but about people—starting with managers themselves.

3. Know how to connect their teams to the business. Beyond speeches, this is the hands-on, step-by-step job that needs to be broken down so people can know the "why" and "how" of their jobs. Great managers help their team members see that they are part of something much bigger and that they truly make a difference.

4. Know how to deliver results through their teams. They need to know the basics of building effective working relationships, setting clear expectations, coaching and developing people, and following up to ensure executions and celebrate "victories."

If a strategy is to succeed, managers need to interpret and translate the *music* into something people can *actually play*. **LE**

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ACTION: Uncork execution of the strategy.

