

## A Leadership Opportunity

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### **Business Leadership "On Purpose"**

By Russ Volckmann, PhD

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Robert Knowlton wrote a little over a year ago:

"There are two types of things that can knock you off course.

1. The environment around you -- competition, the market, a snow storm, and
2. your own beliefs about yourself-- your commitment, effort and determination.

You cannot do much about the weather, but your own effort, commitment and beliefs are within your control."

If you are a business leader, this alert is very important. It can help you recognize that despite most of the teachings about leadership, being an effective leader is only partially about who you are, what you believe, what is important to you and what you do. The other part is the environment around you--other leaders, employees, competitors, customers, investors and so on.

If you buy that, then you can ask, "What is the purpose of business leadership?" There is no one answer to this question. It depends on the environment, on such things as the nature of your business, the pace of organization change, specialization in markets, new technology, looming crises, etc. These, in turn, help you determine your business' objectives.

For example, if your company is in recovery mode or facing a market shift, the purpose of leadership may be to get others to focus attention on what customers need and how your products or services

can be attractive to them. As a business leader you may focus your energy on connecting with potential clients, gaining their trust and confidence, and establishing strategic relationships.

Defining the purpose of leadership is even more important when there are several or more leaders within your company. The growing complexity of doing business in this world of rapid change almost assures that there are. Getting these leaders aligned and engaged with a shared purpose is also one of the tasks of leadership.

Each leader brings their own set of assumptions and beliefs, their aspirations and commitments. If these are at variance with the purpose of leadership, then leaders will pull in different directions or work at cross-purposes. Thus, it is important that each leader be clear about what they are committed to and how they can align with others to support the business in achieving objectives.

Coaching is a wonderful approach to helping leaders accomplish this and more. A coach working with a business leader or executive on the issues of their leadership would do well to make sure that development is grounded in the dynamics of business objectives and the individual leaders' relationship to those.

Here are some things a coach can do to help business leaders get "on purpose:"

- Use Strategic plans, mission and vision statements to help identify the business objectives that are immediately relevant.
- Define near (what has to be happening now, in this business quarter) and short term (what has to be happening in the next year) objectives. The Strategic Scorecard approach of Kaplan and Norton is a good device for adding to financial objectives what is also important in the organization, in relation to customers, and the needs for innovation.
- Help the client clarify what their assumptions and values are, to identify what is important to them about these business objectives.
- Clarify what the leader is committed to as a leader in relation to these objectives.
- Identify other leaders with whom they must be aligned to support the achievement of business objectives.
- Design strategies for building alignment and taking action to lead the achievement of the objectives.
- Implement processes to work with other leaders to define the purpose of leadership in relation to the objectives and how they will be successful as leaders.
- Develop measurement criteria for success and how data will be

captured, processed and analyzed for future development, including data about the effectiveness of their leadership in this process. Sometimes this can be achieved with 360 degree feedback or simply through conversations. In either case, know what the criteria are that will be used.

Coaching leaders is about a lot more than personal style, communications skills and career objectives. It is about working the interface between the individual and the business or organization. One key element of this is assuring that business leaders are leading on purpose.

There are **four contexts** of business leadership. By engaging all, executives can create a more solid margin of success for their companies. Coaches need to understand these. To learn more about these four contexts, join one of Russ' FREE TeleClasses, "Developing Business Leadership". To join one of Russ' upcoming TeleClasses, visit TeleClass International:  
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