



Mpowerment Matters

January 2006

Management Mpowerment Associates

Forward to a
Colleague



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January is one of the main times of year during which we assess where we are in life. What are we doing well? What could we do better? What habits should we try to drop or change? What should our resolutions be for the coming twelve months? One can count on the fingers of one hand the most frequently hoped for changes - more exercise, weight loss, cutting down or quitting smoking or drinking, spending more time with the family, and being more diligent in work or study habits.

There is nothing wrong with focusing on any of the above areas for improvement. Each is important to the well-being of the individual. The success of changes resulting from this type of assessment can lead to major life improvements in the areas of physical and mental health and family life. But it would be a shame if we stopped there. There are numerous other areas that merit assessment in order to increase career and business opportunities and to bring about individual and organizational change.

Everyone is looking for improved results. When we are training, we want to be able to run faster and go longer distances, lift more, throw further, hit the golf ball longer and straighter. Almost every company wants to see improved results in achieving higher sales, lower costs, more income, better employee retention, etc.

Improved results just don't happen. It takes positive behavior change to bring them about. In order for positive behavior change to occur, there must be attitudinal changes, as our behaviors are a function of our attitudes. While coaching and leadership development can certainly work without assessment tools, these instruments help us hone in on those attitudes and competencies which require development and change in order to facilitate improvement.

Management Mpowerment Associates works with several assessment tools for individuals and organizations which can serve as the basis for substantial positive change personally and organizationally.

ASSESSMENTS AND DEVELOPMENT

The phrase "assessment tools" or "assessment instruments" in our context refers to the methods of gathering data about leadership or organizational performance and understanding, and may include questionnaires, written tests, interviews, checklists and rating scales for projects or performances. They give us some measurements of where we are, and by doing that, point out areas that need development or improvement.

Peter Drucker, one of the greatest management gurus, created an organizational self-assessment process that consists of only five questions:

*What is our mission?
Who is our customer?
What does the customer value?
What are our results?
What is our plan?*

Drucker believed that self-assessment leads to action and lacks all meaning without it. While the self-assessment is short in and of itself, the process of arriving at the answers to the five questions is almost equivalent to doing a strategic plan.

Assessment instruments range from the very simple to the quite complex. An example of a simple organizational assessment can be found in *Fail-Safe Leadership* by Martin and Mutchler. They call it "**a quick temperature check**", and it asks the question "*Might the leadership in my company be falling?*" They say the answer might be "yes" if one or more of the conditions listed is present in the organization.

- Excessive meetings
- Preponderance of consensus driven decision making
- Lack of personal accountability
- Time consuming and/or meaningless performance evaluations
- Communication problems
- Difficulty terminating poor performers
- Misalignment/poorly coordinated efforts
- Personality conflicts and/or power struggles
- Difficulties keeping employees motivated
- Unacceptable results
- Time management problems
- Reactive rather than proactive thinking
- Micro-management
- Can't do attitudes
- Chronically sagging sales
- Unproductive teams and/or ineffective teamwork
- Duplication of effort
- High staff turnover
- Failure to achieve quality standards
- Fear of making decisions

The above type of assessment is not scientifically reliable or verifiable. Instead, it offers a very general sense that something within an organization may or may not be wrong.

A slightly more sophisticated organizational assessment tool is D.I.A.L.O.G. (Diagnostic Data Indicating the Alignment of Organizational Goals). This tool answers the question "*How can we easily measure if the people within our organization are aligned with our strategies?*"

D.I.A.L.O.G. provides an organization's leadership with reasonably hard data as to where there are disconnects between the vision and/or mission, and where management and employees perceive the company to be in a number of key areas.

The most interesting aspect of D.I.A.L.O.G. is that it uses as its foundation the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award criteria. These criteria are well accepted indicators of organizational success. The Baldrige Award was created by federal law in 1987. Information on this Act can be found at www.quality.nist.gov/Improvement_Act.htm. The award promotes excellence in organizational performance, recognizes the quality and performance achievements of U.S. organizations, and publicizes successful performance strategies. The Baldrige Criteria for Performance Excellence are available on the web at www.quality.nist.gov/Business_Criteria.htm.

We at Management Mpowerment Associates offer a full range of organizational assessment tools to assist leaders in determining where opportunities for positive change exist. These instruments are the starting point for the change process. The hard work comes afterward, as the organizational stakeholders strive to institute the changes indicated.

In the area of leadership development, there are also a series of assessment instruments available, again ranging from simple to extremely detailed. Using a medical analogy, these assessments can range from a physical examination (superficial assessment based on described symptoms) to an x-ray (more in depth look inside an individual, but still very one or two dimensional) to an MRI (an in-depth, multi-layered, multi-dimensional approach that offers the most detail). **Hallmarks of Excellence in Leadership** offers a very detailed look inside of a leader.

The leadership model of the **Hallmarks of Excellence in Leadership** is founded on three fundamentals of leadership; all of the leadership characteristics, attributes, attitudes, intuitions and behaviors discussed and delineated all point back to and be a part of these basics. The three fundamentals that all extraordinary leaders continually focus on are:

1. **Mastering the Core-** For the superior leader, this means starting with deep, candid and honest personal self-awareness. Superior leaders then take that self-awareness and intentionally work to increase their leadership effectiveness by creating an executable path for self-improvement. It includes honing your character with regard to all aspects of leadership integrity. It means being willing to understand and manage your own emotions while respecting and acknowledging the feelings, emotions and attitudes of others. It also means being steadfastly committed to being a lifelong learner, assuming personal responsibility for growth, keeping on the cutting edge of best practices and always maintaining a willingness to share knowledge and skills with others.
2. **Forging the Path-** To put leadership into action, great leaders must consciously forge the path for those they lead. And they must be willing to go first. This means inspiring passion, stirring excitement and showing what could be if the path were followed - the path the leader is already creating. Such leaders use big ideas to create a vision and plan that provide clear direction for their organization. They are driven by an understanding of how their leadership can improve the lives of others.
3. **Ensuring Extraordinary Execution-** To be a great leader, execution cannot be ignored. Great leaders must "get it done." They have a bias toward action and a personal commitment to achieving extraordinary results. Leaders who execute well exude a spirit of cooperation and lead with compassion toward others. They consistently work to improve their strategic planning skills, which include an exceptional ability to establish and achieve milestones, overcome obstacles and manage finances with exceptional abilities.

The **Hallmarks of Excellence in Leadership** can be taken over the internet, with results coming back very quickly. Numerous competencies are measured and benchmarked with a two hour interpretation session of the results a major portion of the assessment. The results truly pinpoint which areas require development for the individual to improve performance and excel as a leader. A focused coaching plan can then be instituted to work on those "gaps".

Assessment tools are just that - tools used to achieve a desired result. They cannot stand alone, for what they do is reveal how things are, thus pointing out a direction to be taken to achieve how we want things to be. A strong facilitator or coach can take the results of those assessments and use them as the starting point in a development program that can lead to greatness, and will certainly lead to improved results.

Management Mpowerment Associates uses assessment tools to achieve positive change in organizations and individuals. As we begin a new year, think about how they can be the beginning of growth and transformation in you and your organization.

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