



## **Strategies of Successful Senior Leadership Teams**

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“We’re not just running—we’re galloping!”

These were the words of a member of a senior team in a large, urban health care system. The healthcare environment is complicated and uncertain, to say the least.

And, as we talked with senior leadership teams working in various industries, it became clear that leading organizations in today’s economy is a complex proposition, requiring intuitive and sometimes counter-intuitive practices. When an organization is in *doing* mode, it is hard to imagine taking time to pause. In working with leadership teams, we offered the following strategies for navigating complex, dynamic landscapes. They are derived from our experiences in the field working with senior leadership teams across multiple industries, and thought-provoking conversations with clients and colleagues.

### **Scanning**

*Paying continuous attention to the larger, external environment and the implications for strategy and leadership work*

The key word here is continuous. Scanning the external environment has long been seen as the province of the CEO. It is not enough. This is a task for the entire senior team, because different members are keyed into different aspects of the environment.

### **Informing and Aligning**

*Sharing relevant information so all members of the leadership team have an understanding of the whole, not just their particular area of responsibility...Helps with alignment and subsequent goal setting*

When galloping, it is hard to find the time to have the needed conversations with others. Crossed signals, increased fragmentation or missed opportunities are a consequence. Technology—texts and emails—can only take you so far.

Members of a leadership team have collective responsibility for the success of the enterprise. They can only take up this essential role if they are informed.

### **Anticipating**

*Pausing periodically to anticipate issues...As one leader put it; “to get out in front” of issues, instead of “playing defense” once the issue has escalated.....*

If all energy is going to *responding*, it is harder to be strategic. It is challenging to pause long enough to see what *could be*.

### **Developing Others**

*Mentoring, coaching and transferring knowledge are essential activities for leadership teams*

Leaders need to balance *doing* with *developing*. Senior leaders have a responsibility to ensure the future of the organization. By identifying top talent, and taking time to develop them, leaders can build organizational capacity today, and also attend to next generations of leaders.

### **Appreciating**

*Noticing what’s been accomplished and what’s being learned along the way...Success leaves clues...*

We live in a culture that, for the most part, focuses on what’s wrong. While it is true that much can be learned from understanding mistakes, it needs to be counterbalanced with examining what contributed to success. This focus infuses energy.

### **Learning**

*Continually adding conceptual frameworks and applicable skills to their repertoire of leadership capabilities*

Leaders readily stay up-to-date in their content areas (e.g. manufacturing, engineering, finance, IT, HR, etc.) This is not necessarily the case with leadership capabilities. Leaders need opportunities to learn together, develop a common language around leadership as they live into their leadership roles. They need conceptual “hooks” on which to “hang” their everyday experiences and expand their choices. These tools and frameworks can be infused into the strategic work of leadership teams.



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