



Park Time for Strategic Thinking

Are you working “in” your business or “on” your business? I see many leadership teams obsessing about the day-to-day issues involved in keeping the trains running – without ever looking into the future to see where the train is going! These executives are certainly doing what needs to be done for today. But what about tomorrow? Next year? The next five years?

To think strategically, you need to carve out the time – otherwise, the urgencies of the day overtake your best intentions. One of my MBA professors (and a successful business executive) used to call this “park time” where he would literally go to the park and just sit there and ponder the future of his company.

The same type of experience can work for your leadership team. You don’t need to go to the park, but set aside some time to have a strategic dialogue about issues that are important to your company and its future. For example, you may want to talk about your clients (socio-demographics, wants and needs); your products/services (what you offer and the life cycle); your company (culture, operations, learning and development); your employees (socio-demographics, sourcing and hiring, wants and needs and their learning and development); external forces (economic, social and political implications); technology and the competition.

I suggest you pick one topic. Just one at a time. Invest 30-60 minutes kicking that topic around:

- Describe the current state of the topic within the context of your business.
- Describe what might be happening in the next five years.
- Summarize the key issues, challenges, insights and opportunities.
- At the end, have one person write a summary of the



October 18 Webinar

Beyond Consensus: 3 Little Known Secrets to Achieving Solid Agreements Among Your Team Mates

Thursday, October 18, 2012 at 12 noon ET

Have you ever been in a meeting where you think the group made a decision, only to find out that the decision unraveled days or even hours after the meeting?

Join master facilitator Kristin Arnold as she shares her group process secrets to achieving solid team agreements. After attending this webinar, you will be able to bring the group to decision that all can live with and support upon implementation.

[Register](#) for this free webinar today and you may be the winner of your own signed copy of the book, [Team Basics!](#)

discussion and email it to all. Others can add to the summary if desired.

These short chat sessions are a great way to build your team's strategic thinking muscle – especially in preparation for a [strategic planning](#) session!

Check out this report from McKinsey & Company on additional ways for your team to develop their strategic muscles:

[Becoming More Strategic: Three Tips for Any Executive](#)

Mad Managers By Joseph Sherren, CSP, HoF

I once had the opportunity to interview a great business leader and he told me the secret of his success. He said, "As a leader, when things go wrong and your employees are trying to do their best to meet deadlines, they are already stressed. As a leader, you have a choice. You can become angry, which causes them more stress and lowers their productivity, or you can communicate in a calm way and ask, 'What can I do right now that would take stress away from you?'"

This CEO said the best strategy is always to stay calm and do whatever you can to take away their stress. People who become angry and lose their temper are showing classic immaturity. It is a communication technique learned as a child that they believe is the way to control people and get what they want from others. Unfortunately for most people, especially managers, it does not work.

Anyone who has ever had the opportunity to work with a boss who becomes angry knows how demoralizing and counterproductive that can be.

Even more significantly, anger adds collateral damage to the individual. Studies show that angry people are more likely to suffer a stroke than people who stay calm in the face of adversity. Research often links stress to heart disease.

A recent study which appeared in the Journal of Neurology and Psychiatry looked at how people handle stress in relation to having a stroke. Researchers from the Hospital Clinico Universitario San Carlos, Madrid

Team Quotable

"The best way to cheer yourself is to cheer someone else up."

*Mark Twain
American Humorist & Writer*



From the Bookshelf

A few years ago, I had the pleasure of assembling 18 facilitators to work with Harley-Davidson dealers from around the world at their Dealer Operations Training. Their keynote speaker was Chris McChesney, author of the training program [The 4 Disciplines of Execution](#). While there wasn't anything hugely novel in the program, the concepts were packaged exceedingly well and I have referred many of my clients to these [two videos](#) that express key concepts – my favorite is the "whirlwind" of activities that take up your time.

Imagine my delight to learn that Chris McChesney, Sean Covey and Jim Huling recently published these principles in [The 4 Disciplines of Execution: Achieving Your Wildly Important Goals](#):

1. *Focus on the wildly important* rather than on what is urgent (advice Steve Covey offered decades ago).

measured stress levels using all the latest tools that assess major life events, depression, general health and personality type. They discovered that having an angry personality doubled the risk of having a stroke.

Dr. Curtis Reisinger, a clinical psychologist at Zucker Hillside Hospital in New York, said it is likely that the frustration and hostility associated with this personality contributes to cardiovascular issues. He said, "Anger can elevate blood pressure and we know high blood pressure is a major risk factor for stroke. A lot of people don't even recognize when they are angry. They will often snap with very little provocation," he said.

Biofeedback and cognitive behavior therapy can teach people to control how they react to situations that cause them stress or anger. You can also eliminate your anger by reframing your thinking about everything that happens to you. It is not suppressing your emotions. It is simply having a belief system that says, "I know there is a reason this is happening, and it is my responsibility to find the lesson in the situation."

I hear people say, "That person made me angry." This is not true. The only one who can make you angry is you. Those who become angry engage in thought patterns conditioned from their childhood.

When I asked Jim Ferguson, senior manager with CBC in Charlottetown, how he is able to stay calm when tensions rise, he said he tries to remember that emotion is a choice. "My choice is to respect the people. I have learned that anger does not add value toward problem resolution. I focus on diffusing the tension."

Managers think they can get away with angry and abusive behavior toward employees but the loss of morale, productivity, attrition and even legal issues will eventually catch up with them. Employees learn to read the moods of their managers and the best people will choose to work somewhere else.

Check In!

People come to a team meeting with all kinds of random thoughts – work to be done, a problem to be solved, or a

2. *Act on the lead measures* (indicators of progress) rather than "lag measures" (rear-view results of what has been done).

3. *Keep a compelling scoreboard* that simply cannot be ignored.

4. *Create a cadence of accountability* of frequent accounting.

Extremely well written with lots of examples and case studies, this book makes the case for taking as much time (if not more) in executing your strategic goals as you spend in creating them!

Point to Ponder

"Beware the lollipop of mediocrity; lick it once and you'll suck forever."

*Brian Wilson
American Pop Musician*

About Kristin Arnold

Kristin Arnold is one of North America's most accomplished professional meeting facilitators. An award-winning author, speaker, and team facilitation trainer, she is on a crusade to make all events in the workplace more engaging, interactive and collaborative. Contact us for more information about how we transform your teams from ordinary to extraordinary!

rumor floating around the coffee pot. They aren't really focused on the task to be accomplished or the process that will be used.

What they usually do is stroll in, check out who's there, and maybe engage in light conversation with one or two people before getting down to business.

Take advantage of this natural "check in" process by having each person "check in" with the entire team. This allows team members to share what is on their minds so they can focus on the team's work.

At the beginning of each team meeting ask, "How's it going?" or "What's been going on since we last met?" This creates a space for people to share what's going on with them personally as well as organizationally.

When you allow people a few moments up front to share issues or "get it off their chest," it lets people be physically *and* mentally present with the team.

Call me: 480.502.2100 (w) 800.589.4733 (tf) 480.502.2102 (f)

[EMAIL ME](#)

[MY WEBSITE](#)
