

The Role of the CEO

" The 7 M's is absolutely awesome!!! For someone like myself it is gold because it is a mooring to attach to. Thank you a million times over. "

Hospice CEO



M's

MISSION

MARGIN

MEANING MANAGEMENT

MESSAGE INTO THE COMMUNITY

MAKING THE ORGANIZATION

MAKING PEOPLE

MAPPING THE FUTURE

CHRIS COMEAUX

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Resources

“Like an apprentice, Chris Comeaux has studied and practiced under Leadership Senseis and Grand Masters, hunting and gathering for the types of content, tools, and thinking that can make you a high performing CEO or Executive. His practice in the art of Leadership is battle tested and has made him a sought after resource for those seeking A Better Way Forward. If you intend to be better, sign up and prepare to build the kind of relationship with Chris that Gets it Done!” – Jamie Holmes, CEO Coach



M's

The Role of the CEO: The 7 M's - Mission, Margin, Meaning Management, Message into Community, Making the Organization, Making People, Mapping the Future..

One of our Teleios Team members recently said something to me that really stuck. She said, “Every CEO needs to be focused on the 3 M’s: Mission, Margin, and Message.” This really got me thinking because so often I see CEO’s struggle with understanding exactly what their role necessitates.

The Role of the CEO The 7 M's

In that struggling, I sometimes see them default themselves and go with what they know which, quite often, puts them in swim lanes that affects the performance of the rest of their team. So through reading and research I have come to the conclusion that there are 7 M's that every CEO should be focused on in their role. They are as follows:

Mission

Margin

Meaning Management

Message into the Community

Making the organization

Making people

Mapping the Future

Let's take each of them and go deeper.

Mission

Years ago the leadership guru Peter Drucker wrote a book called *The Five Most Important Questions You will Ever Ask About Your Organization*. That first question is, you guessed it, “What is our Mission.”

Now this does not necessarily mean the CEO writes the Mission Statement although there is nothing wrong with that. The bigger task here is that the CEO ensures the Mission is relevant given the current environment.

Jim Collins is one of my favorite authors and in his book *Built to Last* he points out the paradox of change. “Indeed the great paradox of change is that the organizations that best adapt to a changing world first and foremost know what should not change.” That insight is critical to the middle and intermediate level leader who may feel like they have a mission that in some respects is not keeping up with the changing marketplace or needs of the area they serve.

Mission

Once the CEO is sure their Mission is current and relevant, they need to shout it from the mountaintops. They also need to be the check on the organization, hunting the status quo like it is the enemy, which is those mental ruts that people tend to fall into that causes Mission drift.

So, the first M of the role of the CEO is to ensure the Mission is relevant and then to ensure they are on course to that Mission each and every day. One of my mentors used to call them moments of truth. He would say, “Picture yourself hovering above your organization, literally floating above the earth. Then these snap shots of your Mission in action come up to you like little picture bubbles. What do those snap shots, those moments of truth, tell you about the state of your Mission?”

Margin

My very first executive position was as a CFO for a Hospice in Pensacola Florida. The CEO there had worked with Catholic Health systems earlier in his career and he taught me an adage I will never forget, “No margin, no mission.”

This, of course, came from the nuns who were the administrators of Catholic Hospitals back in the day and that wisdom pervades even today. The margin of the organization is the fuel in the car. It is also a barometer of success or the lack thereof. Although I am a CPA by trade (not your typical CPA), one thing I learned is that the numbers do speak truth, even when they are not totally accurate. Or said another way, where there is smoke there is fire.

In my 27 years of experience, I have not met a leader within an organization that did not wish they had better data, more fine-tuned detailed data. And it can take many years of toil and effort to get those very detailed reports just how you want them.

Margin

However, the great thing about a margin is you can screw up some of the detail amongst categories but the residual from your revenue minus your expenses is a great barometer and usually can be compared against peers. So, an organization should never let having imperfect data stultify them from religiously looking at their margin.

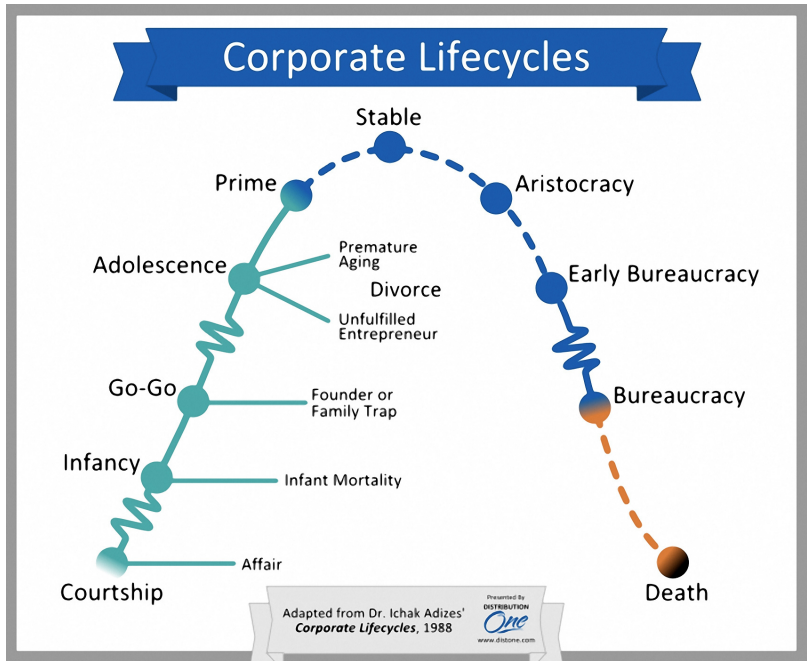
How much margin is enough? Well the answer differs by organization. But here are some good questions to guide you:

What is my industry average?

Where are we intentionally (key word there) different and should that degrade our margin or should it bring more increase to our margin?

Where are we on the life cycle curve (bell shaped curve) for our industry?

Margin



If we are on left side of the curve then margins will be smaller and this is more of an investment time but also a great growth time.

If we are on the top half of the curve this is the time to make hay while the sun shines.

If we are on the right side of the curve then margins will really start to be squeezed and cost cutting is going to have to be in your toolbox.

Margin

Where are we going (this gets to one of the other M's mapping) and what will that journey take in terms of reserves to fund that journey?

The last aspect of margin is to ensure your organization's leadership truly understands the ins and the outs of the above, and they should be fully involved in answering the above questions so the broader team is competent regarding the margin. The CEO certainly should be able to be one of the key teachers of the ins and outs of the organization's margin and why it is so important.

Meaning Management

I learned the term "Meaning Management" from Dr. Lee Thayer who won a lifetime achievement award on being a pioneer in communication. Dr. Thayer flipped the paradigm of communication around as many of us have been trained communication is all in what we say and how we say it. While that is true, where the proverbial rubber meets the road is really in what the receiver of the information interprets. So, if that is true, how does one do a better job at managing the meaning of things?

Well, first know it is not about controlling the meaning of things because that approach leads to bad cultural things in your organization. So managing the meaning is really about intentionality. I have been in many organizations and many types of organizations over the years and one of the first things I am tuned in to listen for is the language people use. If the organization is very loose with its language, it tells me a lot about how intentional they are with many other things.

Meaning Management

Whereas an organization that almost sounds like it has it's own language, an intentional way of saying things and those sayings have meaning, this is usually a sign of a healthy organization in terms of its culture.

Now this is a lot of hard work and takes time to be intentional with one's language. You have to come to work every day in the learning mode. Once again hunting the status quo and the cliché like it is the enemy. Also asking lots of questions is a great way to help manage the meaning of things.

So meaning management is hard work but absolutely necessary as a CEO. To draw from the moments of truth analogy mentioned in Mission, those moments of truth also are a great barometer on how well we have managed the meaning of things.

Message Into the Community

Recently we did an assessment of an organization. The CEO had just turned over and the organization was looking for a replacement. One of the first things every senior leader said they needed in a new CEO was, “They need to be our face to the community.” While I agree with them, there is more to this than just being a face in the community.

Years ago I read a great article by the CEO of Procter and Gamble, A. G. Lafley titled “What Only the CEO Can Do.” Here is what she said, “Conventional wisdom suggests that the CEO is primarily a coach and a utility infielder, dropping in to solve problems where they crop up. In fact, however, the CEO has a very specific job that only he or she can do: link the external world with the internal organization. It’s a job that only the CEO can do because everybody else in the organization focuses much more narrowly and almost always internally.

Message Into the Community

It's a job the CEO must do because without the outside there is no inside."

So messaging into the community is more than being the face, it is also being the ear of what the community is saying, what are they needing, where is the puck going based on what they are saying and what we anticipate they are going to be needing. The CEO's role is then to translate what is learned from the community to reconcile that with what the organization is focusing on and delivering. Once again those moments of truth in action.

Quickly you can see that I mean community in the broadest sense not just your immediate community where your organization lives and serves but also the state community that bears on our mission, and even the national community and in some cases the global community.

Making the Organization

Organization making is one of the primary ongoing tasks of a leader. What I mean by that is the task of composing of the organization. Who is on our team? What role will they play? What roles do we need for the future? What skills will we need for the future?

All of these are really tough questions but absolutely necessary to navigate the future. I have reengineered a Jack Welch quote that gets behind the why, “If the external rate of change is greater than the internal rate of learning, we are screwed.” This is why the learning mode is necessary in any organization and even more so one that aspires to be a high- performance organization. So how the organization is composed is critical. Here are some great questions to provoke thinking around organization making:

**How do decisions need to be made given where we are headed as an organization?
Do we have all the skills we need to
navigate the future?**

Making the Organization

How does the team play together on a day to day basis in executing our plan?

What skills are we missing and can we learn those skills via external resources and/or do we need an internal resource to help us cover that gap?



Organization making is one of those never ending always evolving and ongoing tasks of being a CEO. Think of a conductor of an orchestra, if their music composition and utilization of the orchestra is fully competent, it will produce beautiful music. How's the music of your organization? The composition has a lot to do with it.

Making People

At Teleios Collaborative Network we define leadership this way based on two key fundamentals:

1) You cannot lead others if you are not on a journey to be the master of yourself. This is a life long journey with no destination but you have to be on the journey. If not, you will not be good for yourself and certainly you will not be effective leading others. This is all about self-mastery.

2) It involves caring for others which means that you will not let those whom you have been entrusted with to lead default themselves. You will provide guidance, challenging, mentoring, coaching, and unconditional love for them to realize their best selves.

That is what people making is all about and you cannot give what you do not have. This also speaks to that term that we have used several times, the learning mode. The learning mode is core to people making and is absolutely core to making yourself.

CHAPTER 6 (CONTINUED)



The learning mode means approaching every day as a new opportunity to learn and grow. To approach life with an insatiable curiosity, not as one who has all the answers but as one who has great questions. Questions are life giving and provoke thinking. Many times, answers shut down learning and growth.

So people making is dependent on growing yourself and being in the learning mode and making it necessary that all within your organization are on that same journey as well. Not because you demand it of them but because there is no better way to transform your life and their lives in the process and help to make them better people.

Mapping The Future

How does your organization know if it is on track if it has no idea where it is going? Mapping the future is about charting a course for your organization. At Teleios Collaborative Network, we have many tools we help our members utilize to help them map their future, but, instead of espousing tools here, let me just share the principles.

To go on a journey you have to know where you are headed. This is the plan. To know where you are headed you have to have a good assessment of the external environment, where things currently are and some prediction of where things are headed.



Mapping The Future

You can't forget as part of that assessment you need to reconnect with who is your customer and what are their needs, and then identify the intersection of where things are headed with those needs.

Then you need a good internal assessment of your organization's readiness to navigate that predicted future. It is always good at this point to check your compass which is your Mission, Vision, and Values as an organization for they should be your compass to help you navigate this journey you want to go on.

Discover More



Conclusion

So there you have it the 7 M's of being a CEO: Mission, Margin, Meaning Management, Message into the Community, Making the organization, Making people, and Mapping the Future.

These competencies may take you a lifetime to master but to create a high performing organization, which can only be called that if it is made up of high performing people, is well worth the journey because in the process you will become better yourself and so will those around you. Enjoy the journey!



To learn more visit our website
www.teleioscn.org

RESOURCES

- 1 Peter Drucker and Frances Hesselbein, The Five Most Important Questions You will Ever Ask About Your Organization (Jossey-Bass; 58270th edition April 18, 2008)
- 2 Jim Collins and Jerry Porras, Built to Last (Harper Business; 3rd ed. Edition October 26, 1994)
- 3 Lee Thayer, Leadership: Thinking, Being, Doing (WME Books; 60079th edition April 24, 2007)
- 4 A. G. Lafley, "What only the CEO can do," Harvard Business Review May 2009

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