



Will your organization survive what lies ahead?

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Ever wondered if your organization (company, agency, school) will be around five years from now? Ten years? Next month?

The ability to successfully navigate the turbulent economic, political and cultural landscape that lies ahead will no doubt separate today's industry leaders from tomorrow's left behind losers.

Think about your organization for a moment. Are things going well? Do you anticipate things will continue to go well in the future? How do you know?

If you want to maximize the likelihood your organization will not just survive, but thrive in the coming years, the first step is to conduct an honest appraisal from which you can derive a realistic action plan.

Several years ago, John Gardner identified nine requirements essential to sustained organizational viability. As each requirement is discussed, reflect on how your organization stacks up.

"The organization must have an effective program for the recruitment and development of talent."

Just like in sports, who you have on your roster often determines how successful you are going to be in the game of business, education, or anything else. But having the right talent only matters if they are utilized to their full potential.

Does your organization attract high caliber applicants? And once you have them on your team, do you work with them to continually enhance their knowledge, skills and competencies?

"The organization must be a hospitable environment for the individual."

Organizations that allow their employees to be themselves tend to be more successful than those who expect everyone to adopt the corporate persona and embrace the collective culture.

And while there are always limits – if you are a Satan-worshipping nudist you might want to reconsider bringing your authentic self to work – in general people want to be who they truly are.

Does your organization allow everyone to be themselves at work?

"The organization must have built-in provisions for self-criticism."

Fear inhibits the ability to respond decisively when faced with challenges and the willingness to tell the emperor she has no clothes – without worrying about how she will take it - is critical to long-term success.

Is the leadership at your organization self-deceived to the point they can't see what's really going on? Or can they be asked uncomfortable questions without fear of reprisal?

"The organization must have a fluidity of internal structure."

Research has demonstrated conclusively that turf squabbles are a huge impediment to creativity, innovation, motivation and sustained progress. They distract from the core mission.

Be honest. Are jurisdictional boundaries within your organization set in concrete? Or are employees free to associate and collaborate with each other across units, departments, teams, etc.?

"The organization must have an adequate system of internal communication."

Nothing good ever comes from employees self-censoring their contributions and interactions in an effort to conform to perceived norms.

Does a guarded, often unspoken system of communication exist at your organization? Or is the culture characterized by an open, almost spontaneous sharing of information?

“The organization must have some means of combating the process by which members become prisoners of their procedures.”

What makes your organization successful today won't guarantee success in the future. Change is the only constant and familiarity often breeds vulnerability. A preoccupation with “the way it's always been done” is a sure recipe for organizational demise.

Are the policies and protocols at your organization a means to an end or an end in themselves?

“The organization must have some means of combating the vested interests that grow up in every organization.”

Myopic thinking and failure to see the big picture - or appreciate the greater good - has led to the downfall of many organizations. Internal struggles for control often metastasize into terminal cancer.

Do departments and units within your organization circle the wagons and go to Defcon 2 every time they perceive a threat to the way they like to do things?

“The organization is interested in what it is going to become and not in what it has been.”

Resting on the organization's laurels and constantly paying homage to past accomplishments often constitutes the fastest route to mediocrity and irrelevance.

Is your organization constantly looking ahead and developing plans and contingencies for what may be just around the next corner – and/or a hundred miles down the freeway?

“The organization must have members who have strong convictions developed in an atmosphere that strives toward continual improvement.”

People who care and see what they do as an extension of who they are make the best employees. Moreover, those who want to do a better job tomorrow than they did today are invaluable to an organization.

Do the employees at your organization seem apathetic and uninterested in continuous improvement? Or do they believe that what they do matters and are constantly striving to up their game?

So how does your organization measure up? Will you be around in the future?

Be honest.



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