

Leading Talented Teams

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The role of the leader is to select and develop the team and then help them to make the right choices. It requires focus, discipline, and above all, a deep understanding of the people you work with.

01 CHOICES

Narrow your options

Encourage your direct reports to make few choices and reduce their number of priorities.

“The first powerful step in strategy is where not to play and what not to do.”

- A.G. Lafley

Use a strategic choice framework to narrow down options and remove advocacy from decision-making.

1. Get everybody's preliminary thoughts on the table.
2. For each, ask what would have to be true for option A to be better than the other options.
3. Get everybody to agree on the theoretical conditions without personal preference.
4. If the conditions are true, A is clearly the best option. If not, move to the next option.

View the goal

Ensure that winning is clearly defined to measure your sustainable competitive advantage.

Consider using operating total shareholder return to measure the value created by the company, and the Net Promoter Score to measure the value for the customer.

CASE STUDY

One-to-one

A.G. invested 30 to 60 minutes with every one of his 25 leaders, every month. It was his way of showing that he was all-in. He stipulated that the meeting would be half their agenda and half his with no required outcome.

He carefully observed how they chose the agenda and what they chose to talk about. He found that those with a tight agenda focused on positive business outcomes typically ended up being less successful over time. The leaders who grew the most were those who were more vulnerable and open to learn.

Keep score

The more you can reduce something to measurable progress, the better it works. A clear framework saves time by removing subjective arguments on progress. Accurate metrics help to take away manageable risks.

Separate capabilities from advantage

While a company may have many capabilities, it should have few that are defined as a competitive advantage. Pick the top two or three capabilities that you want to be the best at in your industry and measure against those.

Focus on what you can control

View the business environment through the model of three concentric circles: concern, influence, and control. Companies are increasingly expected to take a stand on society's problems and the leader's list of concerns is growing.

At the same time, their ability to control is shrinking. This puts a premium on the things you can control and influence, such as leading and managing yourself and assembling the right team.

“Assembling a team that's on a mission and totally committed counts way more now than it ever did.”

- A.G. Lafley

EXERCISE

Three types of business

When choosing a leader for a new business that you acquired or invested in, define what type of business it is:

1. Start it up,
2. Keep it up, or
3. Fix it up

Each requires a different type of leader.

02 THE RIGHT PLAYER

“Start the conversation with, do we really have the right player in the right job playing the right position?”

- A.G. Lafley

Play people to their strengths

Companies commonly make the mistake of assuming that a good general manager can play any position. Rather, place strong talent in positions that play to their strengths and experience. They need to be successful for the team to be successful.

Don't waste time correcting people's weaknesses. To take full advantage of their talent, build their strengths and delegate the areas for improvement to others.

“I deeply believe that at the core, you want a meritocracy with very high levels of ownership.”

- A.G. Lafley

Assess blindly

Use blind assessments to find and develop the best talent and cement a culture of meritocracy. Include the financial and business results, broad-based feedback, as well as qualitative assessments from external suppliers, customers, and investors if relevant.

You are likely to uncover people that you were underestimating or others that are progressing quickly due to followership rather than results.

Partner with your HR department to collect the data and allocate resources for interviews with meaningful outside stakeholders.

CASE STUDY

Personal Rewards

After a particularly challenging period at P&G that resulted in major business successes, A.G. sought to reward people appropriately. He partnered with his HR leader and gave everybody an extra two days off. The extra vacation was compulsory and had to be taken during summer when their families were more likely to be home.

A.G. was surprised by how popular the initiative became and how much more powerful it was than financial rewards. At P&G, a core goal was to be so in touch with the consumer that they could respond to their unarticulated needs. Through the rewards exercise, they learned that they needed to apply the same approach to their workforce.

Ownership

Allow your leaders to own their mission. They must feel that the mandate to dig out of the crisis or grow the company from good to great is theirs to deliver.

03 THE RIGHT TEAM

“It's easier to find individual players than mold a great team that can perform mission after mission, quarter after quarter, year after year, challenge after challenge.”

- A.G. Lafley

Build culture

Strong cultures are connected, collaborative, curious, and courageous.

Encourage everyone on your teams to be as open as they can possibly be. Even high performing individuals should be removed quickly if they cannot become a contributing team member who helps the team perform better.

Allow space to make mistakes and learn from failures so that your teams build courage and confidence. Any failure that isn't illegal, immoral, unethical, or recklessly betting the company is a failure that can be learnt from.

“I kept reminding people that even in everyday consumer products, the failure rate of new products was around 85%. Striking out a few times isn't failing. It's learning.”

- A.G. Lafley

EXERCISE

Right player, right position

When assembling your leadership team, have the discipline to analyze each role and ask the following questions:

1. What is the job of every player?
2. What specifically do you want them to do?
3. What outcomes do you want them to deliver?
4. What additive value do you want them to bring to the team?

Complement biases

Just as teams provide a mix of types of intelligence and capabilities, they also include diverse biases. Encourage people to be open about their biases so that others can complement them and together see through the team's collective blind spots.

Flex the pace

Push your teams and individuals harder when things are going well. Don't let them slack off, get complacent, or miss unexpected disruptions. Use the positive energy to stretch people to goals they didn't think they could achieve.

When you're in a crisis, let people rest. Make sure they and their families are taken care of before you ask them to push again.

"The worst thing we could have done in June of 2000 was beat everybody up because the company had fallen so far so fast."

- A.G. Lafley



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